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Poe at 200

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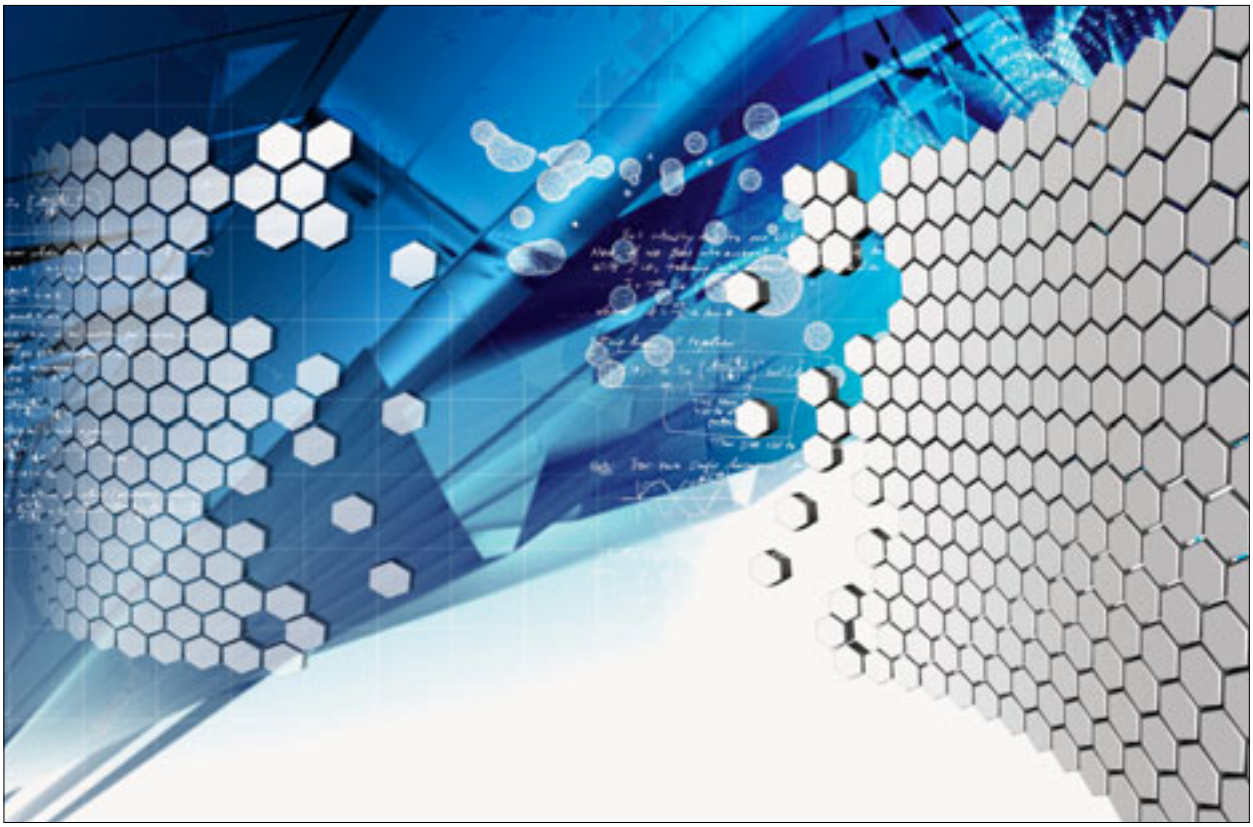

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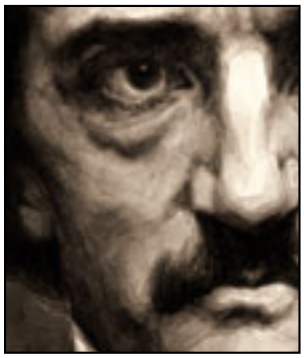

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the weekly Standard

The Weekly Standard (ISSN 1083-3013), a division of Clarity Media Group, is published weekly (except the first week in January, third week in April, second week in July, and fourth week in August) at 1150 17th St., NW, Suite 505, Washington D.C. 20036. Periodicals postage paid at Washington, DC, and additional mailing offices. Postmaster: Send address changes to The Weekly Standard, P.O. Box 50108, Boulder, CO 80322-0108. For subscription customer service in the United States, call 1-800-274-7293. For new subscription orders, please call 1-800-283-2014. Subscribers: Please send new subscription orders and changes of address to The Weekly Standard, P.O. Box 50108, Boulder, CO 80322-0108. Please include your latest magazine mailing label. Allow 3 to 5 weeks for arrival of first copy and address changes. Canadian/foreign orders require additional postage and must be paid in full prior to commencement of service. Canadian/foreign subscribers may call 1-850-682-7644 for subscription inquiries. American Express, Visa/MasterCard payments accepted. Cover price, $4.95. Back issues, $4.95 (includes postage and handling). Send letters to the editor to The Weekly Standard, 1150 17th Street, N.W., Suite 505, Washington, DC 20036-4617. For a copy of The Weekly Standard Privacy Policy, visit www.weeklystandard.com or write to Customer Service, The Weekly Standard, 1150 17th St., NW, Suite 505, Washington, D.C. 20036. Copyright 2009, Clarity Media Group. All rights reserved. No material in The Weekly Standard may be reprinted without permission of the copyright owner. The Weekly Standard is a registered trademark of Clarity Media Group.

BPA INTERNATIONAL

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The Sound Bites and the Fury

THE SCRAPBOOK couldn't make the recent march on Washington, where hundreds of thousands of Americans arrived in the nation's capital to petition their elected representatives about fiscal restraint, criticize Obamacare, protest higher taxes, and promote a variety of allied causes. In fact, we were feeling a little sorry for ourselves—having missed all the fun—until we read the various accounts of the event in the media, which instantly cheered us up.

You could tell the march was a roaring success by the deliberate attempt among the chattering classes to minimize its size, misrepresent its message, and cast aspersions on the many thousands of citizens who participated—peacefully, happily, and with considerable effect, according to the polls.

Anger was the representative slur. Hendrik Hertzberg in the *New Yorker* was his usual poetic self—"the fury returned, uglier than before and no longer subject to the minimal restraints inherent in a national electoral campaign"—as he invoked a frightening image of rampaging yahoos in their "tea-partying, town-meeting-disrupting, pistol-packing" fury. Somebody named Lydia DePillis, a *New Republic* reporter-researcher (translation: young pup who has to work on Saturday) reported-researched to her readers that "On Saturday, September 12, America threw a gigantic temper tantrum in Washington, D.C."

At which point, THE SCRAPBOOK felt the shock of recognition. Temper tantrum; where had we heard that before? And then it struck us: Who can forget the immortal observation of the late Peter Jennings, the onetime ABC-TV news reader, who summed up the 1994 congressional elections, which returned Capitol Hill to Republican control for the first time in 40 years, with these choice words:

> Some thoughts on those angry voters. Ask parents of any two-year-old and they can tell you about those temper tantrums: the stomping feet, the rolling eyes, the screaming. It's clear that the anger controls the child, and not the other way around. It's the job of the parent to teach the child to control the anger and channel it in a positive way.... The voters had a temper tantrum last week [and] the nation can't be run by an angry two-year-old.

True enough, but who is the parent here, and who is the angry two-year-old? THE SCRAPBOOK has always had a suspicion that certain segments of America's left wing have misgivings about democracy—dissent, popular sovereignty, checks and balances, free speech, all that stuff—and that the exercise of these democratic principles is an affront to those who, by virtue of their virtue, know what is best for us.

Take the *New York Times*, for example. Thomas (*The World Is Flat*) Friedman is enraged by America's messy political system, with its balance of power and universal suffrage and McCoys and Hatfields who dare to question the pronouncements of the White House or, say, the *New York Times*. The spectacle of our popular democracy is so almighty frustrating to Friedman, in fact, that he wrote a column extolling the "one-party autocracy" of the People's Republic of China which, despite its 60-year record of tyranny, political repression, and the slaughter of tens of millions of Chinese, "is led by a reasonably enlightened group of people" who are doing what Friedman would like to do to America.

To paraphrase Peter Jennings, while it might be the job of parents to teach children to control their anger

What They Were Thinking

LANDOV

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"and channel it in a positive way," few Americans regard the exercise of their basic rights as "anger," and fewer would choose Thomas Friedman or even Lydia DePillis as their "parent." ♦

Good News from the Garden State

A small group of homeowners in Long Branch, N.J., has been fighting to keep their houses since 1995. That's when the city government began working with a private developer on a massive redevelopment project for Long Branch. The developer promised to bump up the town's tax base; the town promised to declare the necessary land blighted and help the developer seize land via eminent domain. (The entire ordeal was chronicled in "Razing New Jersey," February 13, 2006.)

Long Branch itself was no prize—the town had indeed fallen on hard times. But the neighborhood the developers wanted to raze was one of the last well-kept, middle-class parts of town. The homeowners in the neighborhood banded together and, with the help of the Institute for Justice, fought back.

Over the years one of the developers was sent to prison for doling out bribes; a city councilman went to jail for accepting them. A shady trial judge found in favor of the town and the developers, only to be unanimously overturned on appeal. But last week, after 14 years of battle, the homeowners achieved total victory. The town withdrew its eminent domain filing, signed an agreement not to seek another one, and will also pay a portion of the homeowners' legal bills. And the developer has been ordered to repair the damage it's done to the neighborhood over the years.

Sometimes you can fight city hall. ♦

Beth Rickey, 1956-2009

The country owes a debt of gratitude to conservative Republican activist Beth Rickey, who died September 11 at the age of 53. "There had been a time, back in the early 1990s, when journalists and academicians, Jewish leaders and evangelicals, conservative and liberal, all proclaimed her a heroine. They were right," Quin Hillyer wrote in the *Washington Times*. "Beth Rickey, perhaps more than any single person, helped stop the meteoric political rise of neo-Nazi David Duke."

Even after facing death threats, Rickey exposed Duke's odious views by secretly taping and releasing his racist and anti-Semitic statements made during public speeches and private phone calls with Rickey. She then founded the Louisiana Coalition Against Racism and Nazism (LCARN), which helped to defeat Duke in the 1991 Louisiana governor's race.

As Hillyer wrote, "LCARN's research, political ads and publicity efforts against Duke eventually garnered international acclaim. The organization hounded Duke at every step. And finally, just in the nick of time in 1991, Duke's balloon popped. [Governor Edwin] Edwards ended up winning by a monumental landslide, 61.2 percent to 38.8 percent. Duke never recovered politically." ♦

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Casual

The Eyes of Texas

My grandmother Eastland liked to talk, and she considered it her duty to share family history with me, her only grandchild. So whenever we visited her down in Hillsboro, Texas, she and I would sit at her kitchen table in chairs stiff as pews, and she'd speak late into the night.

I was too young then to appreciate her tales of soldiers from the American and Texas revolutions and the Civil War or of belles like Lillie Lee Lipscomb. But I could tell she loved her subject, and her energy charmed me. I liked the way her tiny cowbell earrings rang whenever she shook her pepper-colored curls or stomped her foot to make a point. It seemed to me delightfully peculiar that she had such a vivid romance with the past. In her mind people didn't die with the grave; they kept on, looming large in her imagination.

When you went into her house, with the pecan trees out back, the first thing you saw were oil portraits of William Harrison "Howdy" Martin and his wife Martha Gallimore, her grandparents. They had died before her birth, but she knew the details of their lives in full and kept their letters, as far back as their courtship in the late 1860s. I suspect she talked to their likenesses when others weren't around.

One of her favorite characters from our family tree was Edward Müegge "Buck" Schiwetz—pronounced Shuhwitz—who married Howdy's granddaughter, Ruby Lee Sanders, in 1926. Buck was an artist who worked as an ad man and freelanced on the side, and the other day I took down a book of his work and leafed through it for the first time since childhood. There, in *Buck Schiwetz's Texas*, I revisited his lithographs, etchings, drawings, and watercolor sketches of the Lone Star State.

I first heard of Buck from my grandmother in the room where the portraits hung. She'd beckon me to sit beside her on the white chintz couch, and we'd go through the book page by page.

Knowing my bent for art, she thought I'd like Buck. Maybe I'd even take after him and become the next chronicler of Texas buildings, bluebonnets, and coffee-colored longhorns. It would have been a supreme achievement in her estimation. She wholly agreed with a line from the inside flap of the book jacket: "No state has ever received a more beautiful token of devotion from a son than the one E.M. Buck Schiwetz has given to Texas."

La Lomita, near Madero

Buck, like my grandmother, cared for things of historical significance. He rendered iconic buildings but preferred the ones that weren't well known—what he called "the unheralded buildings." He sought out stray courthouses, like the one crumbling in Helena, and the oldest churches of every denomination, then drew each brick, stone, plank, and blade of grass with care. He worked to support his family, of course, but also to raise the profile of those early buildings. If there was one thing Buck hated, it was the sight of them "destroyed either by neglect or by progress," as a friend of his wrote.

In 1965, the Sons of the Republic of Texas bestowed on Buck their highest honor for upholding the state's cultural heritage: They made him a knight of the Order of San Jacinto, founded by Sam Houston in 1843 to gather and acknowledge the sons who had sacrificed for a greater Texas, at the time an independent republic.

Buck worked hard for what he achieved. In school he took on extra tasks and was the art editor of his high school yearbook, *The Longhorn*. After college, he worked for various companies, among them Humble Oil (now Exxon). Once he retired, he rose at five in the morning and drew for 8 to 10 hours. When he faced troubles—among them alcoholism and the loss of his studio and work to a fire—he pressed on, resolving to create more than he had before.

Looking through *Buck Schiwetz's Texas*, I noticed some things in his pictures for the first time: men in fedoras on their way to and from the office, long-nosed cars parked outside courthouses, inky crosshatching borrowed from the *Saturday Evening Post*, and dozens of Roseate Spoonbills caught up in the ecstasy of flight. And then there are the place names jutting out like elbows—Varner Plantations in Brazoria County and Zorn House in Seguin. And there, on page 95, is the Hill County Courthouse in Hillsboro, still standing in my grandmother's hometown.

I try saying all those names aloud, but I'm a Washingtonian, and my version sounds flat. Martha Leila Martin Eastland's voice, I recall, had just the right lilt.

Katherine Eastland

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You deserve a factual look at . . .

Mr. Netanyahu's Offer (II)

Are the objections of the Palestinians justified?

In our previous *hasbarah message* (#117, **"Mr. Netanyahu's Offer [I]"**), we told of the Netanyahu's government's willingness to allow a Palestinian state to arise alongside Israel in Judea/Samaria (the "West Bank") and in Gaza. Not surprisingly, he attached certain conditions to this offer, all of which the Palestinians totally rejected. The objections that we discussed previously referred to the "settlements," the demilitarization of the new state, and the "return of the refugees."

What are the facts?

In addition to those conditions mentioned above, Mr. Netanyahu's offer of a state for the Palestinians in the "West Bank" and in Gaza included two further requirements: One, that Jerusalem remain the undivided capital of Israel and two, that the Arabs recognize Israel to be the Jewish state.

An Undivided Jerusalem. Before the end of the 1967 Six-Day War, during which the Israel defense forces reconquered Jerusalem from the Jordanians, claims to Jerusalem being a Muslim city were rarely if ever asserted. Jerusalem had always been a city in which many religions and nationalities lived side-by-side. It was only after the old city was back in Jewish hands that the Muslim Arabs declared their desire to wage "jihad" (holy war) to bring the city into Arab possession.

> "Here is another chance for the Palestinians to have their own country... Chances are overwhelming that, once again, they will reject the outstretched hand...."

The notion to call Jerusalem an Islamic holy city has only come about in modern times, especially after the Arabs lost the city to Israel in the Six-Day War. It has now gained currency by dint of constant repetition. Basis of the claim is that Jerusalem does indeed contain an Islamic holy site, the Temple Mount, sacred to both Muslims and Jews. But Jerusalem has for centuries been the capital of the Jewish people and has been the capital of Israel since its founding. It is mentioned hundreds of times in the Bible. There is not a single mention of it in the Koran.

Israel is the State of the Jews. Mr. Netanyahu insists that Israel be recognized as the Jewish state. But such recognition is obviously only a formality. Israel was established as the Jewish state by the Balfour Declaration, by the League of Nations, by the United Nations, by the consensus of the world, and by the facts on the ground. The reason that the Muslims do not wish to recognize Israel as a Jewish state is that it would supposedly prejudice the rights of the Muslims and perhaps members of other religions who live in Israel. But that is nonsense. Regardless of what it is called, everybody understands that Israel is indeed the State of the Jews, and so do the over 1 million (approximately 20% of Israel's population) Muslims that live in Israel as full citizens, with all the rights and privileges of their Jewish fellow citizens. Nobody seems to object that, for instance, Iran designates itself as an "Islamic Republic." For the Muslim world to recognize Israel as the State of the Jews would simply be recognizing reality.

It has to be clear to every student of modern history that the Palestinians, if that were their real goal, could have had their own state since at least 1937, following the Peel Report. There have been many opportunities since. The most important of those was the 1948 decision of the United Nations to partition the country west of the Jordan River into a Muslim and a Jewish state. The Jews eagerly accepted the proposal, which the Arabs utterly rejected and instead invaded the nascent state of Israel with the armies of five of their countries. There have been many other opportunities since, all of which the Muslims have rejected. One must come to the unhappy conclusion that to create a state is not the ultimate goal of the Palestinians. The ultimate goal always has been and continues to be the destruction of the state of Israel.

Mr. Netanyahu's offer of allowing a Palestinian state to be created and to exist along Israel is a most generous offer. No parallel can be found in the annals of world history. It is abundantly clear that the "conditions" accompanying Mr. Netanyahu's offer are more than reasonable. Surely, after decades of open hostilities and the recent bitter example of Gaza, it should go without saying that the newly formed state should be totally and reliably demilitarized. It should be clear that the "settlements" – about 300,000 Jews in a sea of over 3 million Arabs – cannot be an obstacle to peace, since the over 1 million Arabs living in Israel are not considered a problem. It should be clear that the "refugees," which have swelled from the original 650,000 to allegedly more than 5 million, should be settled in the newly to be formed state of Palestine.

Jerusalem has been the center of Jewish life and Jewish yearning for over 3,000 years. There is no reason why it should not remain the undivided capital of Israel. And, of course, Israel is a Jewish state. Everybody understands that, whether the Muslims do or do not wish to accept it. Here is another chance for the Palestinians to have their own country and to live in peace and in prosperity alongside Israel. But chances are overwhelming that, once again, they will reject the outstretched hand that is being offered.

This message has been published and paid for by

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There's No Free Health Care

Give President Obama credit for persistence. And stubbornness. And lack of imagination. He declared again last week that his health care plan "will slow the growth of health care costs for our families and our businesses and our government." And this historic achievement will be accompanied by a dazzling array of new medical benefits that everyone will receive—guaranteed by law. Okay, you've heard this before. But that's the president's story, and he's sticking to it.

The question is, why? Does he think we're stupid? His argument has failed to persuade a sizeable majority of the American people precisely because they're not stupid. They understand the laws of addition and subtraction. When you offer more—much, much more in this case—of a good, it's going to cost more. Somebody has to pay for it. Yet Obama says we'll all be paying less, and that includes businesses and government.

If he could actually pull off this feat, he would indeed be the One we've been waiting for. But he can't. This is apparent whenever Obama explains where the "savings" will come from. They're from eliminating "hundreds of billions of dollars" in waste, fraud, and abuse (WFA) in the health care system. Surely, he knows better. Everyone in Washington recognizes these savings are imaginary. They're offered with a wink. They never happen. President Reagan promised to slash WFA in the 1980s. The result: zilch. Where Reagan failed, Obama is not likely to succeed.

Obama may be unaware, but there are three programs—in Maine, Massachusetts, and Tennessee—currently testing his idea of get-more-pay-less. The evidence is already in: Expanded health care coverage costs more, an awful lot more. There are no known exceptions.

The test cases mirror Obamacare in one way or another. In 2003, Maine decided to cover the uninsured by expanding the state's Medicaid program and creating a government-run "public option" to provide health insurance with subsidized premiums. Controls on hospital and doctor costs would lead to reduced premiums and savings for everyone, without tax increases, or so it was claimed. Five years later, "the system that was supposed to save money has cost taxpayers $155 million and is still rising," the *Wall Street Journal* reported. Meanwhile, Medicaid enrollment has doubled to 22 percent of the state's population, and access to the public plan has been capped.

In Massachusetts, "universal" coverage was enacted in 2006 along with a requirement that everyone be insured or pay a fine. (By 2009, the fine was up to $1,068.) Again, the claim was made—a claim Obama repeats—that costs would decline once everyone was covered. Today, 97 percent of Massachusetts citizens are covered, the highest rate in the country. But costs have soared to the point the *New York Times* characterized them as "runaway." Spending on the state's health insurance program has risen by 42 percent. A major cause shouldn't have surprised anyone: The newly insured have flooded doctors' offices for medical care paid for by others. Now Governor Deval Patrick, a close ally of Obama, wants to impose cost controls.

The Tennessee experiment began in 1994 with one thought in mind: curbing the rise in health care costs. TennCare was established to cover everyone either on Medicaid or unable to obtain insurance. Rather than bend downward, the cost curve has steeply climbed. In a decade, spending surged from $2.5 billion to $8 billion. To cope with this, the state is cutting the TennCare rolls and reducing benefits. The program still consumes a higher share of the state budget than any Medicaid program in the country.

Meanwhile in Congress, there's a new strategy for financing Obamacare: Tax the health care industry. This, too, is bound to drive up costs. Take the $4 billion annual tax the legislation fashioned by Max Baucus would slap on the medical device industry. Not only would it dampen research into innovative technology, it would raise the price of medical equipment. The higher costs would be passed on to hospitals and doctors and patients, leading inevitably to higher insurance premiums. The president hasn't voiced an opinion on this idea, though he's praised Baucus for producing a bill.

Obama is stuck. He is promoting his health care plan as a money-saver because that's what pollsters tell him the American people want to hear. But it's plain to nearly everyone that Obamacare would be just the opposite. There is a way out: Propose a reform plan that would credibly curtail the growth in health costs. Such a plan exists. The president need only ask Republicans for a copy of it.

—Fred Barnes

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Obama Caves to Iran

Again.

BY STEPHEN F. HAYES

GARY LOCKE

Perhaps the most discussed passage in Barack Obama's Inaugural Address was his peace offering to dictators and leaders of rogue states.

Stephen F. Hayes is a senior writer at THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

"To those who cling to power through corruption and deceit and the silencing of dissent," he said, "know that you are on the wrong side of history; but that we will extend a hand if you are willing to unclench your fist."

The man who had campaigned on direct meetings with rogue leaders "without preconditions" appeared to be toughening his approach just a little. The words were conciliatory and intended to signal a shift from the Bush administration, but he added a condition.

The next day Bill Neely of Britain's ITV News reported the response from the leadership in Iran. "Obama's is the hand of Satan in a new sleeve," explained Hossein Shariatmadari, spokesman for Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, Iran's supreme leader. "The Great Satan now has a black face." Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad wasn't impressed either. "If it's like the past and America is bullying us then there will be no new era between us," he said.

Obama has spent the intervening eight months attempting to convince Ahmadinejad and Iran's clerical leadership that he is not a bully. Despite these efforts—and in some ways because of them—the Iranian leadership remains firmly in power, more radical and more dangerous than ever. The Obama administration's short history of relations with Iran is a picture of weakness.

On March 19, in a videotaped peace greeting, Obama offered best wishes on the celebration of Nowruz—the Iranian New Year—to "the people and leaders of the Islamic Republic of Iran." Obama spoke of a "season of new beginnings" and said

> My administration is now committed to diplomacy that addresses the full range of issues before us, and to pursuing constructive ties among the United States, Iran and the international community. This process will not be advanced by threats. We seek instead engagement that is honest and grounded in mutual respect.

In a speech the following day, Khamenei dismissed Obama's overture. "Change in words is not enough, although we have not seen change in words, either." He accused Obama of following the "crooked ways" of George W. Bush.

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The Obama administration's response was to step up its efforts. In an early April meeting with European diplomats in London, Undersecretary of State William Burns formally declared that the United States would participate in face-to-face talks with the Iranians, and the P5+1 negotiating group (made up of the permanent members of the Security Council and Germany) conveyed the invitation to Tehran. There was no response. So in early May, Obama wrote a letter directly to Khamenei to express his desire for an amicable resolution of the disagreements over Iran's nuclear program and an end to the decades of hostility between Iran and the United States.

Still no response, though later that month, Iran tested a solid-fuel rocket capable of hitting Israel and the U.S. bases in the Middle East. Although Iranian leaders have long claimed that their nuclear program is peaceful, Ahmadinejad celebrated the successful test at a campaign rally by declaring:

> In the nuclear case, we send them a message: Today the Islamic Republic of Iran is running the show. We say to the superpowers, "Who of you dare to threaten the Iranian nation? Raise your hand!" But they all stand there with their hands behind their backs.

And that is precisely what Obama did when the Iranian regime brutally put down protests that had arisen following the rigged presidential elections on June 12. He initially refused to condemn the crackdown to avoid upsetting the Iranian regime. Only after international broadcasts began running the grisly scenes from the streets of Tehran on a loop, and following strong denunciations from several European leaders, did Obama speak out against the escalating violence. Still, the White House never supported the courageous opposition leaders for fear of "meddling" and never challenged the bogus results of the election. (At one point, in response to a question about whether the U.S. government recognizes Ahmadinejad as the legitimate leader of Iran, White House press secretary Robert Gibbs said: "He's the elected leader." After the outcry, Gibbs amended his statement.)

The Iranian regime did not appreciate the forbearance. In his first public speech after the disputed election, Khamenei falsely claimed that Obama had been supporting the Iranian opposition and wondered how he could reconcile the hostility towards Iran with the conciliatory letter of May.

Throughout the summer, the Iranian regime arrested, persecuted, and in some cases killed the vocal critics of the sham elections. The Obama administration said little and continued to insist that the United States wanted to engage Iran.

In early May, Obama wrote a letter to Khamenei to express his desire for an end to the decades of hostility between Iran and the United States. There was no response, though later that month, Iran tested a solid-fuel rocket capable of hitting Israel and the U.S. bases in the Middle East.

Iran finally answered the invitation for talks on September 9—five months after it was first proffered. The response—two days after Ahmadinejad declared that his country "will never negotiate" on nuclear weapons—was almost farcical. The ten-page document offered to talk about a wide variety of issues, including "elevating the weight and position of environmental issues in the international relations" and the "enhancement of ethical and human considerations and their full observance in international mechanisms, ties and practices." Conspicuously absent from the response was any mention of the issue that the proposed negotiations were called to address: Iran's nuclear program.

The fist was still clenched, and the Obama administration clasped it anyway. "We'll be looking to see if they are willing to engage seriously on these issues," said State Department spokesman P.J. Crowley, without obvious irony. The meeting is set for October 1.

Last week, Ali Akbar Javanfekr, a top press adviser to Ahmadinejad, was asked about news reports that the United States had offered to sell Iran Boeing planes as a gesture of goodwill. He mocked the reported overture:

> The offer for an economic deal such as selling Boeing planes with the aim of establishing bilateral ties is derived from an inhuman and materialistic view towards other nations. We consider no value and nobility for such relations.

He added that Obama "is held captive by extremist Republicans and has been very unsuccessful with keeping George Bush's ideas out of the White House."

Obama's kindheartedness is dangerous. It requires his administration to ignore an uncomfortable fact: Iran is the world's foremost state sponsor of terror and its regime is committed to killing Americans in both Afghanistan and Iraq.

For years Iran has been providing lethal aid to terrorists in Iraq. Brigadier General Kevin Bergner extensively detailed this support in a press briefing in July 2007. The Qods Force of Iran's Revolutionary Guards, in particular, provides weapons and training to a variety of terrorist organizations—or "special groups"—operating in Iraq:

> Funding and training of the special groups started in 2004. The Qods Force supplies special groups with EFPs, machine guns, rockets, sniper rifles, rocket-propelled grenades and IEDs. Iraqi special groups are trained in one of three training camps inside Iran and are operated by the Qods Force and supported by Lebanese Hezbollah operatives.

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Bergner added: "Our intelligence reveals that senior leadership in Iran is aware of this activity."

Former CIA director Michael Hayden was equally blunt in a speech at Kansas State in May 2008. "It is the policy of the Iranian government, approved to the highest levels of that government, to facilitate the killing of Americans in Iraq."

And earlier this year, Lieutenant General Austin Lloyd, the second-ranking U.S. military official in Iraq, said that U.S. forces had continued to find caches of Iranian-made weapons. He said the discoveries "lead us to believe that Iranian support activity is still ongoing."

The support for terrorists in Iraq is well known, but Iranian mullahs' support for terrorists in Afghanistan has been less publicized.

In February, Dennis Blair, the new director of national intelligence, provided answers to a long list of questions from the Senate Intelligence Committee. In July, the Federation of American Scientists released a copy of Blair's answers that it had obtained through a Freedom of Information Act request. The report has garnered surprisingly little attention considering the explosive claims Blair made. On page 12, he addressed the deadly role Iran is playing in Afghanistan—supporting the Afghan government and the insurgents that seek to bring it down. This support for insurgents—Blair calls it "lethal aid"—means that Iranian weapons are being used against American soldiers and their NATO counterparts.

In February, Director of National Intelligence Dennis Blair informed the Senate Intelligence Committee that Iran is giving Afghan insurgents 'lethal aid.'

Among the disturbing findings:

> Iran has both long-term strategic and short-term tactical interests in Afghanistan and is not content with merely maintaining the status quo. In the short term, *Iran is primarily concerned with preserving its national security and undermining Western influence in Afghanistan, which provides Iran's rationale for providing select Afghan insurgents with lethal aid.* . . . Iran has not altered its activities in Afghanistan over the past year as various Iranian officials describe the Western presence as an occupation and Iran maintains a hostile relationship with the West. *Iran's policy calculation in Afghanistan currently emphasizes lethal support to the Taliban*, even though revelation of this activity could threaten its future relationship with the Afghan government and its historic allies within Afghanistan.
>
> Iran is covertly supplying arms to Afghan insurgents while publicly posing as supportive of the Afghan government. Shipments typically include small arms, mines, rocket propelled grenades (RPGs), rockets, mortars, and plastic explosives. *Taliban commanders have publicly credited Iranian support for their successful operations against Coalition forces.* [Emphasis added]

On August 29, U.S. forces discovered a large cache of Iranian-made weapons in Afghanistan. According to the report by Fox News Pentagon correspondent Jennifer Griffin, the cache included a large amount of C-4 explosives, Iranian-made rockets, and EFPs—the "explosively formed penetrators" that Iran has been supplying to terrorists in Iraq. Sources also told Griffin that an Iranian-made rocket had been fired recently at a U.S. base in Herat.

Iran continues to enrich uranium, it continues to support terrorists, and it continues to suppress political opposition. None of that is surprising. What is hard to understand is the fact that Iran continues to dictate the agenda of international talks. Ahmadinejad is right, the Islamic Republic is running the show. ♦

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A Stab in the Back

The launch of an Iranian Shahab-3 missile

NEWSCOM

Canceling the missile shield betrays our allies.

BY JAMIE M. FLY

President Obama's decision to cancel plans for U.S. missile defense sites in Poland and the Czech Republic is a knife in the back for those countries. The implications for U.S. security and the transatlantic relationship are profound. Critics rightly note that the sudden announcement Thursday sends a dangerous message to allies, both in Europe and elsewhere, who rely on U.S. security guarantees.

Even those who agree with the administration's approach concede that the rollout was clumsy—middle of the night phone calls and little prior consultation. In July 2007, Senator Obama criticized his predecessor for this very thing. The Bush administration, he said, had "done a poor job of consulting its NATO allies about the deployment of a missile defense system that has major implications for all of them."

In addition to the geopolitical implications of this concession to Russia, there are several major problems with the administration's plan.

¶ *Questionable intelligence on Iran.* In his announcement, President Obama stated that his decision was driven by an updated intelligence assessment of Iran's missile programs. According to the White House fact sheet, the administration appears to believe that it doesn't need to worry about Iran's possessing an ICBM capability until around 2020.

In the wake of the intelligence community's failures before the Iraq war and its mismanagement of intelligence regarding Iran's nuclear program, it is surprising to see the White House take intelligence about Iran's sensitive military programs at face value. It is naïve to believe that Iran, as it makes strides in its nuclear program, will not also speed up its efforts to develop long-range missile technology or acquire it from a country like North Korea.

This shift in the intelligence community's assessment dovetails conveniently with the views of Ellen Tauscher, the new undersecretary of state for arms control and international security and a former member of Congress, who earlier this year accused supporters of European missile defense of "running around with their hair on fire about a long range threat from Iran that does not exist."

¶ *Reliance on unproven technology.* Obama and his Democratic colleagues on Capitol Hill have traditionally claimed that they support missile defense, but only systems that are fully tested or "proven." The problem for defenders of Obama's decision is that the system they now support is exactly what they accused the Bush system of being—unproven.

The White House fact sheet notes that by 2020, the United States will deploy the SM-3 Block IIB "after development and testing." Even James Cartwright, vice chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, admitted on Thurs-

Jamie M. Fly is executive director of the Foreign Policy Initiative. He served in the office of the secretary of defense and on the national security staff in 2005-2009.

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day that the technology is "still to be proven." The ground-based interceptors the Bush administration intended to place in Poland were much farther along than Obama's system.

Again, President Obama is doing precisely what Senator Obama found objectionable when he said, in 2007, "The Bush administration has in the past exaggerated missile defense capabilities and rushed deployments for political purposes."

¶ *Exorbitant cost.* The administration has not stated what its four-phase approach will cost. General Cartwright in his briefing did argue that relying on SM-3 missiles is more cost effective than using the ground-based interceptors intended for Poland because the individual interceptors are cheaper. What Cartwright did not mention is the cost of the additional radars and bases, as well as development and testing.

Last year, the Congressional Budget Office waded into the debate over missile defense options for Europe and concluded that a sea-based SM-3 system—which the Obama administration plans to deploy during phase one—would cost $21.9 billion, much more than the $12.8 billion for the Bush missile shield.

The announcement came prior to a flurry of autumn diplomacy—the president's upcoming bilateral meetings with Russian president Dmitry Medvedev at the United Nations General Assembly and the G-20 in Pittsburgh later in the month, the October 1 sit down between Undersecretary of State William Burns and the Iranians, and the reconvening in Geneva of the START negotiations, in which the Russians have insisted that limits on U.S. missile defenses be part of any new agreement.

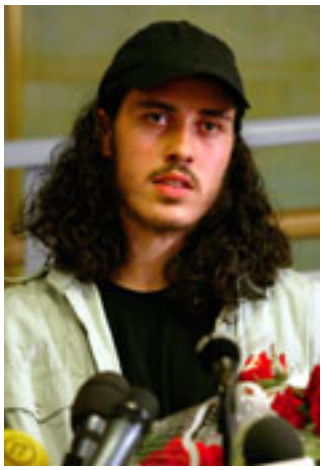
President Obama seems to think that by making a grand gesture and downplaying the Iranian threat he will garner good will from the Russians and the Iranians going into these talks, never mind the hurt feelings of long-time allies. More likely, Iran, Russia, and a watching world will see this for what it is: a colossal sign of U.S. weakness. ♦

Double Jeopardy

Two freed Swedish jihadists get right back to the terror business.

BY MICHAEL MOYNIHAN

With a black baseball cap pulled tight over a mop of stringy long hair and a patchy, close-cropped beard, Mehdi-Muhammed Ghezali looked more like a Metallica roadie than a disciple of Ayman al-Zawahiri. He addressed the scrum of reporters in a clipped, heavily accented Swedish and accused the American government of wrongly detaining him for three years and "physically and mentally" torturing him. A book about his experiences was in the works; a documentary crew, cobbling together a film about American human rights abuses, had requested an audience; and his legal team was plotting a lawsuit against Donald Rumsfeld. It was 2004, and Ghezali was a free man.



Ghezali in 2004

BERTIL ERICSON / AFP/ GETTY IMAGES

In late 2001, Ghezali, a Swedish national, had been detained during the battle at Tora Bora, Afghanistan, handed over to the American military, and sent to the detention facility at Guantánamo Bay. According to his lawyers, he was simply in the wrong place at the wrong time. Although he spoke none of the local languages, Ghezali told his captors, in the midst of the Taliban's retreat into the mountainous hinterlands of Afghanistan, he had crossed that country's border with Pakistan to study Islam.

After an intense lobbying effort by Swedish prime minister Göran Persson—and a vague promise that the country's intelligence services would keep a watchful eye on him—Ghezali was delivered to Sweden (on the government's private Gulfstream jet). The Swedish daily *Dagens Nyheter* noted that Ghezali had achieved "rock star status" upon returning to his homeland, a native victim of America's rapacious imperialism. And after two-plus years in isolation, the emotionally fragile former prisoner would be happy to discover "that a majority of Swedes were glad that he was home."

That his story was threaded with head-scratching omissions and inexplicable gaps in chronology—the years in Cuba were, apparently, not enough time to concoct a consistent narrative—seemed to have little effect on his credibility. To his supporters, he was merely a bit player in a larger morality play. But even his most credulous supporters winced when, during a press conference in his hometown of Örebro, Ghezali offered the following opinion of Osama bin Laden: "I don't know him as a person and therefore can't pass judgment on him. I don't believe what the Americans say about him."

Sweden's justice minister ruled out prosecuting Ghezali, and the story faded from the public consciousness. But in a country with a significant Muslim minority, it was perhaps inevitable that the foreign ministry would find itself in a similar situation again.

In 2007, the Swedish government

Michael Moynihan is a senior editor at Reason *magazine.*

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interceded on behalf of 17-year-old Safia Benaouda, a Stockholm native and convert to Islam, after she was arrested and jailed by the Ethiopian military, then battling Somali Islamists. Ethiopian officials told Sweden's foreign minister, Carl Bildt, that Benaouda had fled Somalia after the defeat of the Islamic Courts Union, on whose behalf she was accused of waging jihad, and had been detained with other fighters after crossing the border into Kenya.

According to the Stockholm-based newspaper *Aftonbladet*, Swedish diplomats engaged in "discreet meetings with the Pentagon, tribal leaders, and African government officials" to secure her release. Benaouda's mother, chairman of the Muslim Council of Sweden, wrote that her daughter was questioned by members of the CIA and beaten by guards—accusations amplified by the Associated Press. After her release, Benaouda went further, claiming that she was tortured in custody, a measure "planned and orchestrated by the Americans or other western interrogators." The claim ensured her permanent victim status in Sweden.

The cases of Ghezali and Benaouda—frequently invoked in the Swedish media as examples of America's tyrannical war on terror—were unrelated. There was no indication that the two had ever met or that they belonged to the same Scandinavian cell of Islamic militants. But the two innocents abroad, curious students of fundamentalist Islam, would soon find each other.

According to reports in the Swedish media, Ghezali and Benaouda were arrested last week in Pakistan—together, travelling with a multinational group of extremists—having crossed the border from Iran on their way to the al Qaeda stronghold of Waziristan. Pakistani sources claim that the group was carrying $50,000 in cash, maps indicating Western embassies, and—every religion student's best friend—an explosives belt. One of the suspects, according to a report in the Swedish newspaper *Expressen*, chewed up the SIM card of his cell phone before he was taken into custody.

That Ghezali and Benaouda had, for a second time, been arrested on terrorism charges provoked little soul-searching from Sweden's anti-American intelligentsia. Jan Guillou, a best-selling spy novelist and popular pundit, shrugged that Ghezali's "strong political interest in Islamist activism" is understandable, considering the time he spent in an American "concentration camp." (It is perhaps worth noting that Guillou's record of political prognostication is rather unimpressive. He wrote a book in 1977 praising the "stable" regime of Saddam Hussein, arguing that the conditions in the prison at Abu Ghraib surpassed those in Sweden's notoriously indulgent penal system, and predicting that by 2000 Iraq's economy would outpace most countries in Western Europe.)

Without irony, Ghezali's attorney reminded the public that he "has traveled in that region previously, and he has an interest in the region." Gösta Hultén, author of a sympathetic book about Ghezali, saw his most recent arrest as a case of double jeopardy: "He has already been cleared from these suspicions once." Those whose suspicions are piqued by a former Guantánamo inmate rearrested in Pakistan with an explosives belt and $50,000 in cash, Hultén believes, can only be motivated by "xenophobia."

The Swedish government is proceeding with extreme caution, telling reporters that little can be done on behalf of those currently detained in Pakistan. It doesn't help that a Swedish citizen, Oussama Kassir, was recently sentenced to life in prison by a court in New York, convicted of attempting to set up an al Qaeda training camp in Oregon.

A bit of unsolicited advice for the Obama Justice Department: If the Swedish government demands Kassir's release, be sure that he serves out his full sentence. ♦

The 'Consumer Protection' Racket

Democrats try another route to government-controlled health care. BY DAVID GRATZER

The Democrats have a new message to justify a massive government intrusion into health care: "consumer protection."

They once suggested that rules aimed at toughening the oversight of health-insurance companies were just footnotes in the debate about health care. But when the president spoke to Congress last week, he listed activities that will be "against the law" front and center. "What this plan will do," he said, "is make the insurance you have work better for you."

David Gratzer, a physician, is a senior fellow at the Manhattan Institute.

Congressional Democrats are hoping to make this issue into a major one. They are holding hearings this month and hauling in insurance executives for a grilling about their business practices. The House Subcommittee on Domestic Policy went first last week, with two days of hearings. Chairman Dennis Kucinich opened the proceedings by stating: "Corporate bureaucrats may put profits before people, thereby becoming as noxious as disease itself."

The House bill tabled in July is full of attempts to expand the government's role in regulating health care companies. There is some good in the draft legislation, including a proposal to stop

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insurers from cutting coverage (known in the industry as "rescission") without clear proof of fraud and limits to "caps on coverage," which means that a patient in active treatment for, say, cancer, can't suddenly be cut off because of an insurance company's preset limit on lifetime spending. But the bill also includes plenty of ideologically based rules that micromanage every health-insurance policy. It even adds a process to create more rules without congressional debate.

Regulations of coverage are known in health circles as *mandates*. They require an insurance company to cover common—and sometimes not so common—procedures or specific patient populations. They add billions to the cost of insurance within state markets.

Politicians like mandates because they make them look tough on the always unpopular insurance companies. But the results are bizarre: Under New Mexico law, "oriental medicine" (their phrase) must be treated like conventional medicine in any insurance plan. New Mexico mandates that circumcisions be covered as well as off-label use of medications and naturopathy (a type of holistic medicine).

Other states require that providers cover acupuncture (11 states), osteopathy (22 states), and social workers (27 states). And legislators have done the same for types of care—dental anesthesia (31 states), surgical second opinions (10 states), and hair prosthesis (10 states), to name but three examples. The provider groups, like acupuncturists, lobby hard for these mandates. And, ironically, it's the big insurance companies that thrive since they are best able to deal with the complexities of regulations and pass on the costs.

It's not surprising that the number of insurance mandates has exploded. In the 1960s, there were a handful on the books; in 2008, according to the Council for Affordable Health Insurance, the number was 1,961.

There is a clear loser in all this: people trying to get coverage. States with fewer mandates do a better job of controlling premiums. A basic health plan in New York (with 51 mandates) costs a family over $12,000 a year. Wisconsin residents can buy a similar policy for $3,100. One key difference: Wisconsin has only 34 mandates (and they tend to be less expensive than the Empire State variety). In Massachusetts, new state laws broadening coverage produced rising premiums. Why did prices rise, despite the expansion of the insurance pool? The 52 insurance mandates imposed by the state legislature. Only 10 states have more.

With support for the public option faltering, Democrats are using 'consumer protection' as the rationale for regulating the insurance market—the next-best route to Washington-controlled health care.

In his congressional address, the president called for an end to the discrimination against people with preexisting conditions: "Many other Americans who are willing and able to pay are still denied insurance due to previous illnesses or conditions that insurance companies decide are too risky or expensive to cover." Ending this practice sounds sensible. The problem is the prescription: community rating, which would force insurance companies to charge everyone the same premium, regardless of age or health.

Community rating attacks a legitimate problem, and it's not surprising that 15 states require it. But, at the state level, it has priced younger and healthier people out of the market. Johns Hopkins's Bradley Herring and the University of Pennsylvania's Mark Pauly analyzed the effects of community rating on insurance in a 2006 paper. Their conclusion: It raised the number of Americans without coverage by as much as 7.4 percent.

And this could be just the beginning. The House bill creates several mandate-generating committees. Bodies like the Task Force on Clinical Preventive Services would have the power to regulate the insurance industry and determine what is a reasonable insurance plan to sell on the national health exchange (the only way for the unemployed, the self-employed, and small businesses to buy coverage). Hidden in the House bill is a committee to take into account "health inequities."

If these reforms pass, America will be a lot like New Jersey. The Garden State has a slew of mandates and enforces community rating. For a 25-year-old man living in New Jersey the premium on a basic insurance policy is more than five times what it would be if he lived in Kentucky. A few years ago, an insurance coalition pointed out that it was cheaper for a family of four in New Jersey to lease a Ferrari on a monthly basis than to buy a family health care policy.

Obamacare would leave us with too many rules, which would crush innovation and add unnecessary costs with little benefit. This, though, may be just what the Democrats have in mind. For years, they have hoped to shift millions of Americans into a Medicare-for-all type program, and at the core of Obamacare is such a public-option proposal. With support for it faltering, Democrats are turning to regulating the insurance market as the next-best route to Washington-controlled health care.

What Americans want is a health insurance marketplace that is reliable, affordable, and compassionate. Congress needs to stop looking for villains and introduce simple reforms to foster responsible competition. The most effective remedy is also the simplest: Allow people to purchase health insurance across state lines. Consumers could shop around and select a policy that best meets their needs—not the political interests of their state legislators. Those with chronic illness will still struggle to obtain coverage, but subsidized insurance pools—those used in Minnesota could serve as a model—can tackle this problem.

Democrats think they have a winning message by touting the importance of consumer protection. But just who is going to protect the consumer from the government? ♦

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The Post-Postracial Presidency

What we learned at the teachable moment.

BY JONATHAN V. LAST

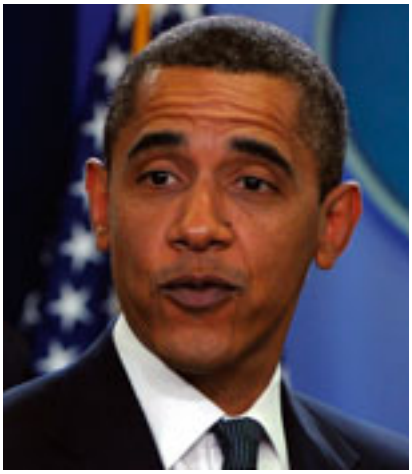
Barack Obama is, you might have heard, America's first postracial president. In his celebrated speech to the 2004 Democratic convention, he assured viewers that "There's not a black America and white America and Latino America and Asian America; there's the United States of America." And, early in 2007, he humbly acknowledged that

> In the history of African-American politics in this country there has always been some tension between speaking in universal terms and speaking in very race-specific terms about the plight of the African-American community. By virtue of my background, you know, I am more likely to speak in universal terms.

Lots of people agreed. Everyone from *Newsweek* to the *New York Times* commended Obama for his "'post-racial' approach" and the manner in which he "transcended race." Even George Will cooed about the political implications of the Obama's "transcendence of confining categories."

Yet Obama was never as postracial as advertised. Despite its charms, Obama's first memoir, *Dreams from My Father*, is filled with racialist moments—from his attraction to Jeremiah Wright's church to the admission that he once broke up with a girlfriend because she was white. Even during the presidential campaign, Obama would occasionally lapse into race-consciousness. The week before the South Carolina primary, the first contest with a substantial number of black voters, he worked a direct reference to Malcolm X into his stump speech, telling predominantly black audiences, "That's what they do. They try to bamboozle you, hoodwink you."

During the presidential campaign, Obama made noise about how McCain and Republicans were going to attack him for his race. After the McCain campaign ran its "Celebrity" ad, suggesting that the Democratic nominee was famous for being famous, like Paris



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Hilton and Britney Spears, Obama suggested that the ad was a racial provocation. "What they're going to try to do is make you scared of me," he said. "You know, he's not patriotic enough. He's got a funny name. You know, he doesn't look like all those other presidents on those dollar bills." At an earlier rally, Obama was even more explicit: "They're going to try to make you afraid. They're going to try to make you afraid of me. He's young and inexperienced and he's got a funny name. And did I mention he's black?"

It was a successful strategy, and when the Reverend Joseph Lowery used the benediction at Obama's inauguration to pray, "We ask You to help us work for that day when black will not be asked to give back, when brown can stick around, when yellow will be mellow, when the red man can get ahead, man, and when white will embrace what is right," people laughed, thinking it was a charmingly homespun tribute to the end of the race issue.

But the first black president has been anything but postracial as chief executive. His first major piece of legislation, the $800 billion stimulus bill attached racial considerations to some of its largesse. In February, Obama's attorney general, Eric Holder, said in a speech to Justice Department employees that America is "a nation of cowards" when it comes to discussing race. Obama disavowed Holder's choice of words, but later told the *New York Times*, "We're oftentimes uncomfortable with talking about race until there's some sort of racial flare-up or conflict. We could probably be more constructive in facing up to sort of the painful legacy of slavery and Jim Crow and discrimination." When a vacancy opened on the Supreme Court, Obama nominated Sonia Sotomayor without even pretending that she was the most impressive liberal legal mind available. Her primary qualification was her "life experience" which made her a "wise Latina."

Another of Obama's hires was now-departed Van Jones as the "green jobs czar." Jones was forced to spend more time with his family because he showed sympathy for a group which believes that the Bush administration was complicit in 9/11. But Jones' background as a community organizer and radical environmentalist was just as disturbing. He founded the Ella Baker Center for Human Rights, which made a business out of launching race-based complaints against the San Francisco police department in the late 1990s. Shortly before Obama appointed him, Jones explained environmental racism thus: "White polluters and white environmentalists are essentially steering poison into the people-of-color communities because they don't have a racial-justice frame."

Jonathan V. Last is a staff writer at THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

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Obama's Justice Department has also been quite keen on racial justice. The president's budget requested an 18 percent increase for the department's civil rights division for the express purpose of hiring more lawyers to work the racial discrimination beat. During the Bush administration, the office had shied away from the blanket pursuit of racial discrimination law, choosing to tackle individual discrimination cases as they arose and focusing on other kinds of crime, including human trafficking and religious discrimination. Holder told the *New York Times* that the civil rights division was now "getting back to doing what it has traditionally done." Namely, sussing out "disparate impact" violations in housing, employment, lending, voting rights, and other areas of American life.

Obama's nominee to head the division, Tom Perez, is certainly preoccupied with race and quotas. (He worked in the civil rights division during the Clinton years before entering Maryland state politics.) In 2003, as a councilman in Montgomery County, Perez pushed for quotas. "We have made great strides in attracting minorities to the county within the last 30 years," Perez said at the time. "We need a workforce in the Department of Fire and Rescue Services that reflects the diversity of the county."

The reason Perez was so concerned was that 46 of the 48 members of the fire department's recruiting class that year were white. The class was chosen based on an aptitude test, in which the white applicants scored highest. "These statistics are unacceptable," Perez said. "But I have confidence that we can get back up to the original number of minorities in the department, and develop a comprehensive plan to recruit diversity."

Three years later Perez published an article in the University of Maryland's *Journal of Health Care Law and Policy* in which he argued for a more rigorous quota system as part of medical school admissions. Perez's stated goal was not just to buttress the current affirmative-action regime, but to erect a new system of quotas should the diversity rationale eventually run afoul of the Supreme Court. He proposed an "access" rationale: Since minority doctors tend to serve minority patients, medical school quotas weren't just important for would-be minority doctors. Not having quotas for minority medical school students would create a disparate impact for all minority patients.

Perez's confirmation has lingered in the Senate, but the acting head of the civil rights division, Loretta King, has already filed 10 amicus briefs in private discrimination lawsuits. In July, she sent a memo to all federal agencies calling for more aggressive enforcement of Title VI regulations—forbidding discrimination by federal agencies. King encouraged "each federal agency to examine anew all aspects of its compliance program." The highest-profile matter to come across her desk is the case of three New Black Panther party members who were charged with voter intimidation at a polling place in Philadelphia last November. (Video surfaced of the thugs harassing voters and brandishing a weapon.) After consulting with another senior official at Justice, King decided to downgrade the charges against the Black Panthers.

Obama's most celebrated presidential moment of race consciousness came this summer when he eagerly injected himself into the dispute between Harvard's Skip Gates and the Cambridge police department. Asked about the incident in which a white police officer arrested Gates, Obama said the officer had acted stupidly and added, "What I think we know separate and apart from this incident is that there's a long history in this country of African Americans and Latinos being stopped by law enforcement disproportionately. That's just a fact." After the officer in question was defended by numerous black colleagues, a "beer summit" ensued with Obama, Gates, the officer, and Joe Biden—heretofore totally unconnected with the affair—called in as racial ballast.

Shortly before the summit, Obama had spoken to the NAACP, where he claimed that while discrimination may be at an all-time low, it's still a terrible burden:

> I understand there may be a temptation among some to think that discrimination is no longer a problem in 2009. And I believe that overall, there probably has never been less discrimination in America than there is today. I think we can say that.
>
> But make no mistake: The pain of discrimination is still felt in America. [Applause.] By African American women paid less for doing the same work as colleagues of a different color and a different gender. [Laughter.] By Latinos made to feel unwelcome in their own country. [Applause.] By Muslim Americans viewed with suspicion simply because they kneel down to pray to their God. [Applause.] By our gay brothers and sisters, still taunted, still attacked, still denied their rights. [Applause.]

It would be nice if our first postracial president would begin the postracial phase of his presidency. ♦

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Rose Kennedy and her youngest son Ted at his wedding reception, 1958

GETTY IMAGES

Ted's Last Hurrah

The authorized version of the Kennedy myth receives one more installment

By Andrew Ferguson

"Oh my," said Dorothy Gale, waving off the candy-colored cloud that trailed some departing witch, "people come and go so quickly here." As it was in Munchkinland, so it is in Washington, D.C. Less than a month has gone by since the death—I guess we're supposed to say "passing" nowadays—of Edward Kennedy, one of the capital's most celebrated residents, and already he seems a figure from a weightless past. The current campaign to reform the nation's health care system was expected to draw new drafts of inspiration from his, um, death, but it limps along pretty much as it did while he was alive; in the arguments his name goes mostly unmentioned, even on the Senate floor, where you might think his passionate bellow could yet be faintly heard but apparently isn't. Flags flew at half-mast but only briefly. The crowd that gathered at his grave has thinned. And his long-awaited memoir, *True Compass* (Twelve, 532 pp., $35.00), a book that was meant to reaffirm his reputation and carry it far into the future, was released last week, stillborn.

Not everyone would have predicted such a fate for (by Washington standards) such a formidable figure, especially in the ranks of those for whom predictions are daily meat, our talky-talky journalists. No sooner had the sad news leaked from Hyannis Port than they were on the air and in print working to establish their intimacy with Ted Kennedy, with a strenuousness that suggested that a Churchill,

Andrew Ferguson is a senior editor at The Weekly Standard.

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a Roosevelt, a de Gaulle, or some other eminence with historical staying power had just clocked out—I mean *passed*. It seemed impossible that the influence of such a man, at once so human and so larger-than-life, would so quickly recede. One columnist said Kennedy had once taken the time to recommend a doctor for his ailing son—the compassion, unprecedented. Another recalled how he, as a young reporter who "didn't know nothing," managed to snag an actual interview with the senator for his newspaper, the *Washington Post*—the generosity, unheard of. Another said that in one of their many interviews Kennedy had shown only moderate interest in abstract philosophy but could cite provisions from a bill he had advocated for two years—the legislative mastery, hard to believe.

The same awe launched this memoir and rushed it into print. It is a product of the great Kennedy apparat, the on-retainer network of publicists, backbenchers, scribblers, private investigators, academics, secretaries, archivists, gag writers, and all-purpose gofers that still survives, in greatly attenuated form, 90 years after old Joe Kennedy put it together from his bottomless bank account. Ted Kennedy didn't write his memoir, of course—getting words on paper has always been a job for the apparat, at least since John Kennedy proudly accepted a Pulitzer Prize for *Profiles in Courage*, which was written by Ted Sorensen (who still, at 81, has yet to complain; a profile in clamming up). *True Compass* draws from interviews done by researchers at the Edward M. Kennedy Oral History Project at the University of Virginia. That material was supplemented by more recent interviews with Kennedy and his subordinates, and from a hamper of "personal notes" that—who knew?—the senator had been jotting down for the last busy 50 years.

To stitch it all into coherent sequences of sentences and paragraphs the apparat hired one of the country's premier overwriters, the biographer and TV essayist Ron Powers, a babbling brook of prose so rich, gorgeous, luminous, ennobling, uplifting, oceanic, swept with the mysteries of sea and sky, that it places him in the pantheon where dwell the greatest Kennedy ghosts: your Sorensens, your Goodwins and Shrums, the artisans who gave us "the work goes on, the cause endures, the hope still lives, the dream shall never die" and much else. You read a sentence like this from *True Compass*—"Taking the tiller has steered me away from nearly unendurable grief across the healing waters on the long hard course toward renewal and hope"—and you realize, damn, it's that same old trumpet summoning us once again. Blow, Ron, blow.

What *True Compass* is, then, is the authorized version, rendered in the patented Kennedy style. With the endless multiplication of grandchildren and great grandchildren, the family blood thins and so does public interest; another episode of drug addiction or sexual assault among this latest generation would scarcely rouse even the most desperate tabloid. So *True Compass* may well be the last chance the Kennedy family will have to place before the public its own version of its history, here seen through the life of its greatest generation's youngest son.

Many accidents of fate conspired to place so great a burden upon Ted's unlikely shoulders. In contrast to his elder brothers, Joe Jr. and Jack, Teddy was not bred or reared for greatness. He was the baby of the family, the apple of his father's eye, and his mother's … well, it's unclear, from his telling, what role he played in Rose Kennedy's world. Ted's undoubtedly genuine and often touching expressions of love for her contrast starkly with, as we say in Washington, the facts on the ground, at least as you find them here. Having deposited her ninth and final child with her team of nannies, and fed up with her husband's wild and ostentatious extra-marital rutting, Rose took to traveling the world for months at a time, until looming war made grand tours inconvenient. Her punctiliousness—she scheduled the subjects of her family's table talk, and furnished each child with background reading to study before dinner—could veer into something darker. She was quick to reach for the coat hanger when she spied any infraction of her elaborate rules, and after the thrashing she would lock the smarting kid in a darkened closet for good measure. Ted's schooling was at the mercy of her extravagant whims. One time, when he reached third grade, she enrolled him in a new school, unaware that its classes were only for seventh graders and up—and she left him there, to "sink or swim."

(This is as good a point as any to address the touchy subject of aquatic metaphors, with which Kennedy's memoir overflows. A man whose public career was nearly ruined by his role in the drowning of a young woman would have done well to steer clear of them—and to tell his ghostwriter to watch out too. Yet here they are, all over the place, starting with the epigraph from a play by Eugene O'Neill. It reads in part: "I lay on the bowsprit, facing astern, with the water foaming into spume under me … I became drunk with the beauty and singing rhythm of it, and for a moment I lost myself—actually lost my life. I was set free! I dissolved in the sea …" The apparat used to be more careful than this.)

Teddy's brothers, like all big brothers, were alternately affectionate, protective, and sadistic, though the age difference between them—Jack was 15 years older than Ted—meant that Joe and Jack, and later Bobby, were often absent from home, pursuing the strict regimen of study, travel, work, and whoring that their father had arranged

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for them as a preparation for the climb to power. Several times Ted mentions his childhood loneliness, shuttled from one boarding school to the next, and there's poignancy to go along with his wistful memories of family good times (scenes that might have been plucked from a PBS documentary: touch football on the lawn, the glistening Sound beyond, the windswept hair, the gleaming teeth …). The best description of Ted's place in the family came from one of Jack's mistresses, who explained it this way to Burton Hersh, an early biographer: "The old man would push Joe, Joe would push Jack, Jack would push Bobby, Bobby would push Teddy, and Teddy would fall on his ass."

His role as family mascot might have doomed him to haplessness. Reaching young adulthood, he became the first Kennedy in three generations to drink in quantity, and he treated it like an ancestral obligation. The family enrolled him in Harvard and he got kicked out for cheating on an exam; he swanned around Europe with B-level starlets and the second cousins of low-ranking royalty; he went to law school at UVA and impressed his classmates most by driving fast cars and nearly destroying the house he had rented from a kindly professor. When his brothers began their rise in politics, he was eager to help but was instead dispatched to distant provinces to charm voters and stay the hell out of trouble. Little Lord Fauntleroy become Fredo Corleone.

The Kennedy men

GETTY IMAGES

To learn much of this family history you have to read between the lines—or, better, you have to read other essential Kennedy texts, such as Garry Wills's *The Kennedy Imprisonment*, to supplement the useful but highly selective account that *True Compass* offers. After Jack was elected president, in 1960, the family decided to give his Senate seat to Teddy as a reward for good behavior and an introduction to the family business. The account in *True Compass* of how Teddy got to the Senate is a masterpiece of sly misdirection and exquisite omission. It serves as a model of how this authorized version sails right past the rough patches of the family history, whether it's his father's bootlegging, Jack's philandering, or Bobby's wiretapping. Teddy will acknowledge that unflattering "stories have been told," which gives him credit for candor, and then he'll ignore the stories, which gets him off the hook.

"The seat was being held by a good man named Benjamin Smith," Teddy writes. "The story has been told that Smith's appointment was arranged specifically to clear the way for me in 1962: he'd agreed to 'hold' the seat until I was old enough to run at age thirty; then he would step aside." Sounds like a cynical power play, doesn't it? But that's not what happened at all, he assures us. "The truth is more complex."

Indeed, the truth is so complex that Teddy never gets around to telling it. He follows this passage with a lengthy and interesting—and completely irrelevant—detour through Massachusetts politics and his brief tenure as a government attorney. The next thing we know, 30 pages later, the detour abruptly ends and Teddy is in the Senate, "the appointed Benjamin Smith having stepped aside." You wonder where poor Ben has been for the last ten thousand words. The truth, novices may be interested to learn, isn't too terribly complex. Like the man said: Smith's appointment was arranged specifically to clear the way for Teddy in 1962, until he was old enough to run at age 30. It was a typically vulgar exercise of the family's sense of entitlement, backed by political muscle, and good man Smith, a family footman, simply faded from the Kennedy story, having done his duty.

Teddy was in the Senate chamber when he got word of President Kennedy's murder. From this calamity, and from the trauma of Bobby's death five years later, the Teddy that most Americans knew emerged. Beyond his own grief, Kennedy admits,

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he fretted for his political future, and any Kennedy watcher will sympathize. The Senate seat that had been bequeathed to him by his family was his for as long as he wanted; Massachusetts voters would do as they were told. But what would Kennedy himself do with it? The purpose of the brothers' pursuit of power had been the acquisition of power. There had been no Kennedy political program to enact, no Kennedy principles to evangelize. The family was utterly uncontaminated by ideology of any kind. Without the brothers, what then was left to pursue?

Chappaquiddick the day after, 1969

ASSOCIATED PRESS

It is here that Teddy's life assumes what historical significance it has, for he became a kind of pointer on the path the Democratic party followed from 1968 on. There was nothing in the family history to suggest that Teddy would become the liberal he became after the death of his brothers—or to suggest the *kind* of liberal he would become. The old man had been a New Dealer, urban-ethnic division, but he loathed the welfare state. He was also an America First isolationist and, after the war, a proud booster and friend of Joseph McCarthy—a friendship that Bobby sealed for eternity by naming the Tailgunner the godfather of his first child, Kathleen (future lieutenant governor of Maryland). Running for president Jack was more hawkish than his Republican opponent, Richard Nixon. As president he zigged and zagged. He wanted to nationalize the steel industry and cut marginal tax rates on the rich by 20 percent. He founded the Peace Corps and tried to blow Fidel Castro's head off with an exploding cigar. Teddy tries retrospectively in his memoir to impose some philosophical order on this presidential dog's breakfast, but it's no use.

"Succinctly as I can," he offers "the list of [JFK's] great accomplishments: championing the American landing on the moon [championing means: giving speeches about]; building the political foundations of the Civil Rights Act [as opposed to *passing* the Civil Rights Act]; standing firm in the Berlin crisis and during the Cuban Missile Crisis [having provoked the former and running the risk in the latter of getting us all killed]; creating the Alliance for Progress; bringing us the test ban treaty and the beginning of the end of the cold war." The Alliance for Progress?

The closest any Kennedy had come to ideological passion was the late-blooming idealism of Bobby. According to official family narrative, the middle brother went to Appalachia in the years after Jack's death, recoiled at the poverty he saw there, and came back quoting Aeschylus. But this is thin soup for a philosophical legacy. Teddy was bereft. In his memoir he refers often to his love of political philosophy. Yet he never bothers to demonstrate it by explaining why, beyond mere convenience and lack of anything else to do, he chose to throw the family name behind the new liberalism that became the reigning ideology of his party—thanks in large part to him.

For our own convenience we can call it 1970s liberalism. It had only a superficial resemblance to earlier editions, and its traces are still with us. Kennedy himself never let it go, even through the milk-and-water moderation of the Clinton years. It entails an obsessive concern with the redistribution of wealth, the imposition of federal control over ever more distant reaches of American life, the raising of abortion to the level of secular sacrament, anti-anti-communism, multiculturalism, quasi-pacifism, and—the ism that undergirds all the others—a fierce, unyielding moralism, according to which any adversary who opposes the isms listed above is not merely mistaken but depraved.

Kennedy's embrace of this moral exhibitionism had its difficulties, practical and otherwise. First, it betrayed the image of intellectual poise and cool detachment that had made Jack attractive to large numbers of voters. More important, Teddy was heatedly testifying to the largeness of his heart even as his "personal failings"—as he called them in his occasional public acts of contrition—became

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impossible to ignore. Bellowing on the Senate floor about the meanness, duplicity, cruelty, power-hunger, hypocrisy, and general indecency of Republicans, he was simultaneously understood by the public to be a negligent husband, a serial adulterer, a liar, and a drunk. Maybe the moral exhibitionism in his political life was compensation for the rapacity of his private life. It certainly saved him with the many Democrats who continued to lionize him.

Not every liberal or every Democrat went along, of course. Feminism was one ism that Teddy underestimated—but only at first. In a brave and resounding essay, published in the *Washington Monthly* in 1979, Suzannah Lessard drew a straight line from the family's insatiable hunger for power to the many, many "semi-covert, just barely personal and ultimately discardable encounters" with anonymous women that Teddy was famous for. Other feminists, including Wills, took up the theme. Teddy responded by energetically adopting causes dear to his critics, especially by dropping his previous reservations about an unlimited abortion right. On paper, anyway, he became a raging feminist. The "personal failings" continued, however, and in the end, when he challenged President Carter in 1980, they cost him the prize of a presidential nomination. A Helen Reddy party would not tolerate a Rat Pack nominee.

The paradox between private Teddy and public Teddy disappeared once he married his second wife and settled down to a routine of domesticity and hard work. The moral exhibitionism was still there, needless to say. It's scattered throughout his memoir, as when he complains about opponents who "continue their long-standing habits of spurning the poor, the helpless, and the hungry—especially hungry children." (That last clause, about the "children," must be pure reflex: Did he think the bad guys were slipping food to the parents on condition they not share it with the kids?) Meanwhile, he gained a reputation as a great legislator and, less predictably, as a model of bipartisanship. His commitment to "getting things done" and "crossing the aisle" were the two qualities that our talky-talkies mentioned incessantly after his death, in an implicit rebuke to the bumptious ideologues that are alleged to be ruining Congress today.

The list of legislative accomplishments attributed to Kennedy is indeed long. It's also inflated by celebrity and longevity. His decades in the Senate guaranteed that he would have lots of chances to pass bills, and his fame guaranteed he would get primary credit for bills that got passed whether he deserved it or not. Any number of sitting senators have been as energetic and effective. Give Richard Lugar, Kent Conrad, Max Baucus—even Orrin Hatch!—another 15 or 20 years and their achievements will match Kennedy's. The talky-talkies won't notice, though.

Kennedy was a tireless promoter of his reputation for bipartisanship, what he calls in his memoir "my abiding impulse to reach across lines of division during my career." The aisle-reaching came and went with the political seasons. It first appeared in 1980, when the Senate, for the first time in Kennedy's career, fell into the clutches of Republicans, whose cooperation Democrats suddenly required if they were to continue leading the country along its forced march toward human perfection. With a few exceptions, Kennedy before 1980 had been as willing as any majority member to muscle aside the minority. Yet he really did believe, as he says in his memoir, that "we were elected to do something." Something, anything. His faith in governmental activism was a huffing, puffing engine that knew no rest. He wasn't going to allow a Republican electoral victory to stand in the way. And so, for example, he happily conspired with the first President Bush to pass the draconian Americans with Disabilities Act and, with the second, the disastrous No Child Left Behind education reform. In the proponents of "big-government (or compassionate, or national-greatness, or kinder, gentler) conservatism" he found the useful idiots he needed. He knew, as they did not, that any expansion of federal power would in the end work to his advantage and that of his ideological heirs. They could always rewrite the details later.

Though of course it's his last, *True Compass* is not Ted Kennedy's first book. In the late 1960s he got out a collection of his speeches; it slipped into obscurity after a magazine rudely pointed out that Ted's speechwriters had cribbed passages from speeches they had originally written for Bobby, which had already been collected in book form. And 1979 brought us *Our Day and Generation*. It wasn't much more than a photograph album of various Kennedys in poses of playfulness or purpose, in sorrow or in sunlight, garnished with more squibs from the speechwriters. Even so you could tell the book was a certified Kennedy production. It carried an introduction by Henry Steele Commager, one of the great American historians of midcentury. The foreword was written by Archibald MacLeish, perhaps the era's foremost middlebrow man of letters.

It is striking that the apparat could muster nothing so classy for *True Compass*. The ranks of retainers have run thin. Times have changed. The night is far spent. Published as it is without blurbs or imprimaturs of any kind, it seems naked almost, stripped of all ceremony and left to stand or fall on its own. And if it falls, what are we to conclude? That perhaps the cause doesn't endure after all? That the work may not go on? That the dream, whatever it was, may not survive the dreamer, because the dreamer was himself the dream? ♦

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Obama's Middle East Gambit

There are far greater obstacles to peace than the Israeli settlements.

By Peter Berkowitz

Tel Aviv

Masters of the art teach that subtlety, indirection, and on occasion misdirection are crucial to successful diplomacy. Perhaps, then, President Obama is up to something shrewd.

When he took to the stage in Cairo in early June to address Muslims and discuss "the situation between Israelis, Palestinians and the Arab world," he called on Palestinians to renounce violence and develop their own political institutions, Israel to stop building in the West Bank, and Arab states to assist the Palestinians and recognize Israel's legitimacy. Since the speech, however, much has been heard from the administration about the need for an Israeli settlement freeze and little about Palestinian and Arab state obligations.

Peter Berkowitz is the Tad and Dianne Taube senior fellow at the Hoover Institution, Stanford University.

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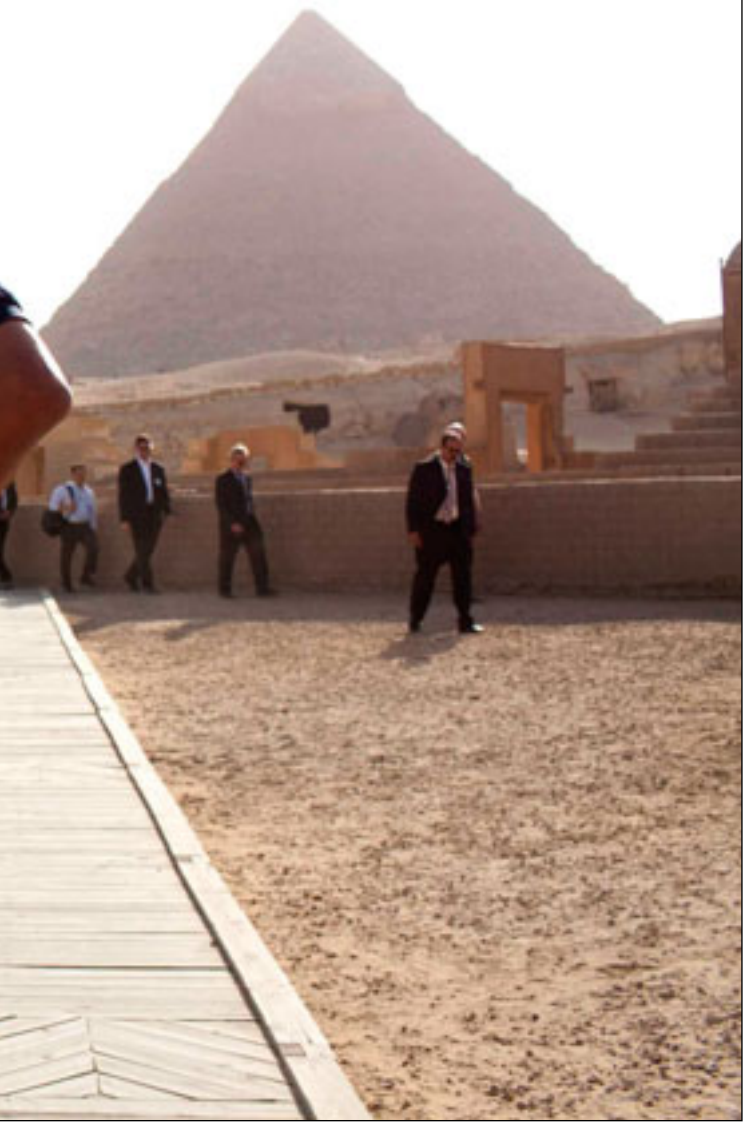

Obama in Egypt, June 2009

NEWSCOM

If something shrewd does lie behind the decision to focus on Israeli concessions, then Obama and his administration are executing a dangerous gambit. It is likely to reinforce the false analysis popular among Palestinians, Arabs, and European and American intellectuals, an analysis reaffirmed earlier this month in a *Washington Post* op-ed by former President Jimmy Carter: "A total freeze of settlement expansion is the key to any acceptable peace agreement or any positive responses toward Israel from Arab nations."

And if the high-profile imposition of pressure on Israel is not a gambit, if the president believes that once Israel freezes West Bank settlement construction then the parties will proceed to successfully negotiate a final status agreement that brings into existence a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza that lives in peace with Israel, then he is dangerously deluded about the basic elements of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the overall logic of Middle East politics.

Either way, the hard truth is that, much as the settlements represent a formidable challenge to a peace agreement, other and intractable differences on critical issues separate Palestinians and Israelis. To make negotiations a top priority as the Obama administration appears to have done is to expend limited time and energy on what at best will be a sideshow.

Meanwhile, real, if incremental progress toward the day in which Palestinians can establish a state of their own consistent with Israel's national security interests depends on tasks to which the Obama administration has paid lip service but which it has done little to advance. These include improving dysfunctional Palestinian political institutions and political culture, building up the Palestinian economy, containing and defeating Hamas, cajoling or compelling Arab rulers around the region to assist the Palestinians and normalize relations with Israel, and, looming over all, countering Iran's multipronged strategy—involving the acquisition of nuclear weapons and sponsorship of Hezbollah and Hamas terror—to impose its brand of Islamic rule on the entire Middle East.

According to the generous interpretation, which informed Israelis following the comings and goings of Middle East envoy George Mitchell and special assistant to the president Dennis Ross consider plausible, the Obama administration is well aware that the settlements are not the sole or even most significant obstacle to peace. But seeking to set America's relationship to the Muslim world on a new footing and needing Palestinian Authority (PA) president Mahmoud Abbas and Arab rulers on board for his ambitious plans, Obama has sought to earn good will around the region by demonstrating his readiness to require painful concessions from Israel.

If such is Obama's gambit, it has thus far failed to bear fruit. No Arab ruler has come forward to propose a thawing of relations with Israel should Israel agree to freeze settlements. Fatah's recently concluded Sixth General Conference was short on conciliatory statements and long on reaffirmations of Palestinians' right to engage in armed struggle. And Hamas continues to attack Fatah for failing to embrace jihad to destroy Israel.

Perhaps Obama will announce a breakthrough in his September 23 address to the United Nations General Assembly. The reopening of Israel's tiny, unmarked

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The settlement of Maale Adumim just outside Jerusalem

NEWSCOM

trade mission in Qatar or a few meetings at the U.N. with Arab leaders or the launching of a few cultural or scholarly exchanges would be nice, but more than gestures will be necessary to build Israeli confidence. Permission from Saudi Arabia for El Al passenger jets to fly through Saudi airspace en route to Asia would be a step forward.

The sort of action that is long overdue and almost certainly not slated anytime soon, say an invitation from the Saudis for the Israeli foreign minister to visit Riyadh, would be a momentous one. It might not instantly produce crowds in Israel demanding substantial withdrawals from the West Bank, but it would transform public debate. The sight on TV screens in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem of an Israeli foreign minister shaking hands with his counterpart in the Saudi capital would spark enthusiasm for major concessions in a nation that has not ceased to yearn for peace even as it has, with each passing year, grown more resigned to persevering in the absence of a willing and able peace partner.

But suppose Obama's gambit, if gambit it is, pays off. Suppose Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu agrees to a settlement freeze sufficient to bring Abbas back to the negotiating table. What then? Most likely the Obama administration will relearn the sobering lesson taught to the Bush administration during the frustrated quest for a peace agreement that began at the 2007 Annapolis Conference. As in 1949, 1967, and 2000, Palestinians are unprepared to make hard decisions and accept the painful concessions necessary to bring into existence a Palestinian state.

People of good will and understanding on both sides of the conflict have for several years recognized the broad outlines of a final agreement between Israel and the Palestinians. Having in 2005 withdrawn from every last inch of the Gaza Strip and in the process removed 10,000 civilians from 21 settlements, Israel will, in exchange for "secure and recognized boundaries," return most of the West Bank territories that it seized in 1967 when Jordan attacked it during the Six Day War. The suburbs of Jerusalem and a few large settlement blocs will remain under Israeli sovereignty, but Israel will evacuate tens of thousands more citizens. Jerusalem will stay Israel's capital, even as accommodations will be made for Palestinian self-government in East Jerusalem. And, because if implemented it would spell the destruction of Israel, the Palestinians will need to abandon their claim that all Palestinians—not merely those who left or were forced out of their homes between 1947 and 1949 during Israel's war of independence, but

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the millions of their children and their children's children living in Gaza, the West Bank, and in refugee camps in Lebanon and Syria—have the right to return to Jerusalem, Jaffa, and Haifa.

It was an even more generous offer—including the dismantling of most of the settlements and Palestinian sovereignty over half the Old City of Jerusalem—that Ehud Barak delivered to Yasser Arafat in July 2000 at Camp David. Rejecting the offer outright, Arafat proceeded a few months later to launch the Second Intifada and to release against Israel wave after wave of suicide bombers. While it is unlikely that, if Obama administration-initiated negotiations fail to yield an agreement, Abbas will launch a third intifada, little has changed that would allow him to sign the very generous deal rejected by Arafat, let alone the undoubtedly more restricted offer which would come from Netanyahu.

A wide swath of Israelis in and out of the national security establishment believe that Abbas does not want to go down in history as the Palestinian leader who yielded land or Jerusalem to the Jewish state. Abbas, they believe, will settle for nothing less than a return to the 1949 armistice boundaries or Green Line, which would place the entire Old City of Jerusalem under Palestinian authority and give Israel indefensible borders. And Abbas has given no sign that he is prepared to abandon the Palestinians' uncompromising belief in their right of return. Indeed, according to Giora Eiland, a former head of the Israeli National Security Council, the right of return is not merely nonnegotiable for the Palestinians, but it and not a state of their own has all along been the Palestinians' main goal.

The inability of their leaders to compromise on crucial issues is only the beginning of the obstacles to peace emanating from within the Palestinian people. Even if their leaders were able to summon the courage to compromise, the dozens of hostile Fatah factions show no signs that they could be persuaded or compelled to go along. And there are more formidable obstacles to implementation.

Start with the lack of basic political institutions. Fifteen years ago Israel rescued Yasser Arafat from growing irrelevance in Tunisia and, under the auspices of the Oslo Accords, brought him and hundreds of his fighters and followers to Gaza and the West Bank to preside over the PA. Arafat proceeded—as he had in Lebanon and before that in Jordan—to govern as a despot and bring chaos and anarchy. He stole most of the billions of dollars of foreign aid that the United States and the international community transferred to the PA between 1996 and 2004, billions that should have been used to build roads, factories, hospitals, homes, and schools. Mahmoud Abbas is not a colossal thief and may be devoted to pragmatic accommodation, but he governs in the Arafat mold, and the PA has never had free and fair elections, and lacks clear laws, impartial law enforcement, administrative efficiency, and sound financial practices.

In late August, PA prime minister Salam Fayyad made news by announcing his intention to concentrate on building Palestinian political institutions so that in two years' time, regardless of progress in formal peace negotiations, the Palestinians would be in a position to declare their independence. No seasoned observer in Israel believes that Fayyad can come close to preparing the PA for independence on such a timetable. It is not that they doubt Fayyad's competence or commitment. He has both and can certainly point to real successes. The West Bank economy is growing. The streets of Ramallah and Nablus are bustling. The Palestinian security forces are gradually assuming greater responsibility for maintaining internal security and, in cooperation with the Israeli Defense Forces and the Shabak (Israel Security Agency), have dealt Hamas a series of setbacks.

But one shouldn't be misled. An American-trained technocrat, Fayyad has little grassroots support. The Palestinian legislature is powerless, and the Palestinian judiciary both corrupt and incompetent. Worse could be said about municipal government throughout the West Bank. A decent criminal justice system will require years of concentrated effort. In addition, much of the Palestinian economy's growth is due to massive injections of foreign aid finally reaching their target. Even so, unemployment remains high. Finally, while the Palestinian security forces, trained in Jordan by U.S. Lieutenant-General Keith Dayton, have made impressive strides in the last few years, they will need many more years of recruitment and training before taking over sole responsibility for maintaining peace and order on their streets, let alone developing the wherewithal, should Israel security forces cease to operate around the clock inside the PA, to prevent the West Bank from becoming an armed Hamas camp posing intolerable threats to Tel Aviv and Jerusalem.

A viable peace also depends on transforming the Palestinians' poisonous political culture. Israeli experts argue that most Palestinians still don't accept the legitimacy of a Jewish state in the land of Israel. According to the estimates of senior security officials, perhaps 30 percent of West Bank Palestinians are pragmatic like Abbas and Fayyad, believing that Israel, despite its fundamental illegitimacy, is a regrettable fact with which Palestinians must learn to live. About the same number believe that Israel is illegitimate and refuse to learn to live with it. The remaining 40 percent or so are up for

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grabs. Unfortunately, according to Reuven Berko—who recently left the Israeli army after serving for ten years as adviser on Arab affairs to the chief of the Jerusalem police—PA-run schools, newspapers, and television are tipping the balance by assiduously cultivating hatred of Israel and Jews. Berko, fluent in Arabic, remarked sardonically, "After watching 10 minutes of Palestine TV, I want to pick up a knife and find a good Jew to kill."

Even if Palestinian political institutions were reformed and Palestinian political culture detoxified, Hamas would still present an insurmountable obstacle to peace. Abbas only got serious about taking on the Iranian-sponsored terrorist group in 2007 after it conquered the Gaza Strip and brutally murdered many of its Fatah rivals. Today, Hamas functions in Gaza not just as a terrorist organization but also as the elected government and a military organization. And it aspires to bigger and better things. It is not out of sensitivity to Israel's security concerns but because of Hamas's aim to take over the PLO and transform itself into the one genuine vehicle of Palestinian nationalism that Abbas threw his support to the Bush administration's efforts to bolster the Palestinian security forces in the West Bank. Their success in fighting Hamas in the West Bank has enabled Israel to reduce the number of roadblocks and checkpoints, which has promoted commerce and improved the quality of life for ordinary Palestinians. Hamas suicide bombers have not pulled off an attack inside Israel for more than a year, and not a single rocket has been fired into Israel from the West Bank. But the progress is fragile.

Even if PA and Israeli security forces make further strides in the West Bank to weaken Hamas, Abbas exercises no influence over Gaza and has little plausible claim to represent the 1.5 million Palestinians living there. Consequently, should the Obama administration succeed in relaunching talks, Abbas will be negotiating a separate peace for the West Bank. There too, however, Hamas has an effective veto. So long as the battle against Hamas requires Israeli security forces to operate freely within the West Bank—as, according to Israeli national security assessments, it will continue to do so in the near and intermediate terms—the PA cannot pretend to be a sovereign state.

There are those who favor giving Hamas a chance. If treated with respect, if included in talks, if allowed to govern in Gaza without crippling blockades imposed by the Israelis and Egyptians, if given more opportunity to share authority in the West Bank, it will mature as a political organization and become a useful partner. According to this argument, Hamas's 1988 charter, which calls for permanent jihad to destroy the state of Israel, should be discounted as an outdated document written by hardliners not reflecting the inevitable moderation caused by the passage of time and the acquisition of responsibility for governing. But this, maintains Reuven Berko, is wishful and reckless thinking. Hamas's only reason for being, he contends, is the elimination of Israel as a Jewish state. Its defining Muslim beliefs forbid it from giving up any part of the *Waqf*, or land once ruled by Muslims, to non-Muslims, especially to Jews who under Muslim law are prohibited from governing themselves in a state of their own. In other words, Hamas cannot, without ceasing to be Hamas, abandon the quest to reclaim for Islam all the land that lies between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea.

Nor is Hamas the only one obstructing peace between Israel and the Palestinians. Arab rulers, especially American allies Egypt and Saudi Arabia, exercise effective vetoes of their own. To offer concessions—on boundaries, on Jerusalem, on the right of return—and survive the fury of rival Fatah factions and the violent opposition of Hamas while winning the support of ordinary Palestinians, Abbas would need a legitimacy that only can be conferred by the willingness of Egypt's president Hosni Mubarak and Saudi King Abdullah to persuade their own peoples that Palestinian compromises with the Jewish state are in order. Neither Mubarak nor Abdullah has shown much proclivity for such leadership.

The unwillingness of Arab leaders to lead does not change the fact that peace between Israel and the Palestinians is irreducibly a regional matter. Full normalization of relations with Israel by Arab states may have to await a peace treaty with the Palestinians, but no lasting treaty will be possible that is not preceded by improvements in the relations between Israel and Arab states. Interim steps should include reining in Al Jazeera—the popular Qatari news network that broadcasts a steady stream of vile anti-Semitic and anti-Israel propaganda to the Arab world; cleansing school systems around the region of textbooks that demonize Israel and teach that Jews are subhuman; releasing state-run Arab newspapers from the obligation to denounce Israel on a daily basis; and inviting Israel to open offices and eventually embassies in Arab capitals and then reciprocating.

Egypt can take another important short-term step toward a viable peace between Israel and the Palestinians. Recognizing the danger posed by an Iranian-sponsored jihadist government on its eastern flank, Cairo has begun to improve security on the border it shares with Gaza and block the smuggling of Iranian weapons and Iranian trained jihadists through the Sinai Peninsula. But it needs to do more. In the absence of dramatic improvements in Egyptian border security, Israel expects that within a few years Hamas will be equipped with missiles that can reach

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Tel Aviv, and Israeli soldiers will have to undertake another military incursion into Gaza to destroy them.

The picture is not pretty, but progress toward peace can be achieved. Given the unbridgeable issues that divide the Israelis and Palestinians and the enormous obstacles to implementation should the unbridgeable be bridged, the Obama administration needs to abandon its naïve and arrogant belief that it can bring peace by dictating top-down solutions. Instead, it should take a page out of the community organizing tradition in which Obama was educated and for the near term concentrate U.S. policy on assisting Fayyad's efforts to develop Palestinian political institutions and the economy. Make no mistake: Political and economic development in the West Bank is not a distraction from the peace process but crucial to constructing the conditions under which Palestinians can one day govern themselves and Israelis can live within secure and recognized borders.

And because of the threat that Hamas poses to development efforts and to Israel, and because Iran funds, trains, and equips Hamas and strengthens Hamas's stature by fanning the flames of Islamic extremism around the region, making the curbing of Iran's influence a centerpiece of American foreign policy equally is essential to the peace process.

That Obama has nothing positive to show for eight months of engagement with Iran sets back the quest for peace between Israel and the Palestinians. While he has been waiting patiently, the world's leading state sponsor of terror has been busy expanding its conventional arsenal, crushing democratic dissent, and pursuing nuclear weapons. In February, Iran launched the Omid, its first locally produced satellite. In May, it launched the Sajil, a missile with a range of more than 1,200 miles. In June, it rigged a presidential election and violently broke up peaceful public demonstrations. In July and August, it conducted Soviet-style show trials. All the while, as the Obama administration has apologized to it, reached out to it, and covered for it, Iran has continued to enrich uranium. Earlier this month, Tehran announced it would not discuss or consider ceasing its nuclear program. And when, in the face of a September 24 deadline to resume talks or face another round of international sanctions, Iran agreed to wide-ranging discussions but excluded the subject of its nuclear program, the United States promptly agreed, with scarcely a word of displeasure, to an October 1 meeting.

Since, as masters of the art teach, subtlety, indirection, and on occasion misdirection are crucial to successful diplomacy, perhaps there is more to the president's conciliatory ways with Iran than meets the eye. But occasionally diplomacy calls for candid, precise, and public pronouncements. Just now it would build Israeli confidence, command the attention of waverers among the Palestinians, and provide a much-needed teaching moment for the international community if the president of the United States were to lay the groundwork for October 1 discussions with Tehran by insisting that Iranian sponsorship of Hamas (and Hezbollah) terror has no place in the civilized world. If the president were prepared to back up such words with deeds, it would promote international order, reassure our Arabian Gulf allies, and substantially improve the prospects of peace between Israel and the Palestinians. ♦

Palestininian prime minister Salam Fayyad and German foreign minister Franz-Walter Steinmeier inaugurate a street paving project in Jenin, 2008.

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An 1841 illustration for 'The Murders in the Rue Morgue'

KEAN COLLECTION / GETTY IMAGES

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The Tell-Tale Artist

Edgar Allan Poe turns 200

BY BROOKE ALLEN

Edgar Allan Poe, whose bicentennial we celebrate this year, holds a troubled and unique place in our national literature.

On the positive side he has maintained a popular appeal, right into our own time, that few if any writers of his era can match. Middle school and high school kids still go to Poe's famous stories for chills and thrills, and recite his poems for the pleasure of his gruesome images and seductively dramatic versification. I have noticed that Poe is the only classic American writer taught at school whose work my own teenage daughters have enjoyed without qualification.

The problem, of course, is that this popularity among adolescents has tended to fill the high-minded with aesthetic distaste. Henry James's snide put-down has stuck: "It seems to us that to take him with more than a certain degree of seriousness is to lack seriousness one's self. An enthusiasm for Poe is the mark of a decidedly primitive stage of reflection." And Aldous Huxley famously used Poe as exhibit A in his influential essay "Vulgarity in Literature": "To the most sensitive and high-souled man in the world," he commented, "we should find it hard to forgive, shall we say, the wearing of a diamond ring on every finger. Poe does the equivalent of this in his poetry; we notice the solecism and shudder."

Is there any justice in this characterization of Poe as a sort of literary Liberace? Perhaps Huxley was a little too high-souled himself; vulgarity is a sin against taste rather than against art, as greater artists than Huxley—artists as various as Shakespeare, Balzac, Dickens, Titian, Tintoretto, Wagner, and yes, Poe—have always known. Poe's undoubted flashiness served his thematic purposes well. Madness, alienation, and mankind's long love affair with morbidity were his subjects, and he didn't mind admitting to being more than half in love with easeful death, to mangle a line from his favorite poet, Tennyson.

His elaborate stage sets were admittedly just that—stage sets, summed up succinctly by his biographer Jeffrey Meyers as "gloomy landscape, crumbling mansion, somber interior, sorrowful atmosphere, terrified narrator, neurasthenic hero, tubercular heroine, opium dreams, arcane books, premature burial, oppressive secrets, tempestuous weather, supernatural elements, return from the grave and apocalyptic conclusion."

Once we have stripped away all this décor, what do we have left? Allegories, largely, of the individual's alienation from society, which was why Poe was to prove so important and influential (more so than his actual skills would seem to warrant) for succeeding generations of writers. Literary movements throughout the second half of the 19th century and the early years of the 20th would claim Poe as honorary godfather: the Symbolists, the Decadents, the Pre-Raphaelites, the Freudians, the aesthetic art-for-art's sake school. Dostoevsky, Kipling, Conrad, Melville, Mary Shelley, Nabokov, Mallarmé, Valéry, and many others were strongly influenced by him; so of course was Baudelaire, who took it as his personal mission to turn Poe into a greater figure in France than he had ever claimed to be in his native land.

And almost incredibly, Poe provided the basic inspiration for three genres now so popular that they have come to take up a large portion of every bookstore and library: horror, science fiction, and detection. Jules Verne and H.G. Wells declared the indebtedness of their work to tales like *Narrative of A. Gordon Pym* and "The Balloon-Hoax," while the classic detective story is entirely constructed upon the outline provided by his Auguste Dupin stories, with the Dupin-narrator-police chief triangle memorably reproduced in Holmes-Watson-Lestrade and Poirot-Hastings-Japp.

No writer with such an enormous legacy spanning low, middle, and high art can be written off as merely juvenile or vulgar. Perhaps it is most fruitful to see Poe as a brilliant generator of archetypes. As with so many major artists, the psychic membrane between his ego and his id appears to have been unusually permeable, his access to the peculiarly potent magic of the dream-life extraordinary. The famous first line of "The Tell-Tale Heart" is emblematic of his entire body of work: "True!—nervous—very, very dreadfully nervous I had been and am; but why *will* you say that I am mad?" Echoed again and again, from Dostoevsky's Underground Man to Camus's Meursault, this was a clarion-call for the prophets of modern alienation. After all, as the narrator of Poe's "Eleonora" argued, "the question is not yet settled, whether madness is or is not the loftiest intelligence—whether much that is glorious—whether all that is profound—does not spring from disease of thought—from *moods* of mind exalted at the expense of the general intellect."

Taken up by Freud and countless others, this theme permeated 20th-century thought, finally becoming a little overworked. But science appears to have demonstrated that there is indeed a connection between madness, or at

Brooke Allen is the author, most recently, of Moral Minority: Our Skeptical Founding Fathers.

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any rate bipolar illness, and creativity. It doesn't necessarily follow that madness is a desirable state. Baudelaire and others have ascribed Poe's terrible life and death to his being too fine and sensitive to withstand the crass commercialism of his world, but this is pure romanticism. Poe was a severe alcoholic from a family of alcoholics, and he was also a singularly self-destructive character, insulting or letting down almost everyone who tried to do him a favor. Perversity was his middle name.

Of course he knew this, and wove it into his art. In his fiction he explored the irrational impulses that guided his life, what he called in "The Black Cat," "this unfathomable longing of the soul to *vex itself*." His ire tended to be as inexplicable as that of the narrator in "The Cask of Amontillado," who never explains just what "injuries" the hapless Fortunato had committed to merit his grisly fate.

Though he created indelible fictional and poetic images, Poe was surpassed by many of his admirers; he was a master of the moment, the image, the impression, and could not have carried off the "sustained effort" (a value, and a term, he affected to despise) necessary to produce a work as complex as *Crime and Punishment* or even *A Study in Scarlet*. Poe's aesthetic strictures, expressed throughout his literary journalism, may have been held in earnest; then again, they may have been formulated to justify the only sort of work of which he was temperamentally capable, and to elevate his own style of writing at the expense of others. (Poe was one of the most considerable critics of his era; modern readers can find all of his journalism in the Library of America's volume of his essays and reviews.)

Brevity, for example, he asserted as essential to great art: a poem or a piece of fiction should be short enough to be read at a single sitting so as to maintain unity, the "vital requisite in all works of Art."

> "I hold that a long poem does not exist," he insisted. "I maintain that the phrase, 'a long poem,' is simply a flat contradiction in terms. . . . There are, no doubt, many who have found difficulty in reconciling the critical dictum that the 'Paradise Lost' is to be devoutly admired throughout, with the absolute impossibility of maintaining for it, during perusal, the amount of enthusiasm which that critical dictum would demand"—for "men do not like epics, whatever they may say to the contrary."

Boris Karloff, Peter Lorre, Vincent Price dramatize 'The Raven,' 1963

AP PHOTO

At best, he maintained, an epic can only be "a series of minor poems," and he thumbed his nose at the critics' tendency to be impressed by "sustained effort": length and quality have nothing to do with one another, he said, and the whole only amounts to a list of parts. This is ridiculous, tantamount to saying that the Taj Mahal is nothing more than a random collection of walls and doorways; that he did not always hold to it is demonstrated by his enthusiasm for Dickens's early novels, but his own work reflects it faithfully—or perhaps the critical position was formulated in favor of his own artistic limitations, for he found it impossible to construct and finish a full-length novel.

Another debatable tenet Poe insisted upon was that "beauty is the sole legitimate province of the poem." He maintained that "that pleasure which is at once the most intense, the most elevating, and the most pure, is, I believe, found in the contemplation of the beautiful." Is this true? Plenty would argue with it. Poe separated beauty from truth and passion:

> Now the object, Truth, or the satisfaction of the intellect, and the object Passion, or the excitement of the heart, are, although attainable, to a certain extent, in poetry, far more readily attainable in prose. Truth, in fact, demands a precision, and Passion, a *homeliness* (the truly passionate will comprehend me) which are absolutely antagonistic to that Beauty which, I maintain, is the excitement, or pleasurable elevation, of the soul.

He took this principle to its fullest extent, anticipating *l'art pour l'art* by glorifying the "poem *per se*—that poem which is a poem and nothing more—this poem written solely for the poem's sake." Correspondingly he considered a didactic poem "no poem at all," and lost no opportunity to express scorn for his contemporaries, the Transcendentalists, referring to them as the "Frogpondians" and characterizing Massachusetts literary life as a "spirit of mixed Puritanism, utilitarianism, and transcendentalism."

No—beauty was the only justification for poetry, and when Poe tried to come up with a definition for poetry, he was constrained to call it "The Rhythmical Creation of Beauty." His truly amazing account of how he came to write "The Raven," included in his essay "The Philosophy of Composition," would seem to support his theories. Here he admits to having chosen subject, meter, rhythm, everything with the sole intention of enhancing beauty, of which the supreme development is melancholy. The process of composing "The Raven" (if he is to be believed), so far from being "inspired" in the true Romantic fashion, is almost

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laughably technical, with Poe cheerfully admitting to having selected "o" as "the most sonorous vowel" and "r" as "the most producible consonant"—hence *Nevermore*, "a word embodying this sound, and at the same time in the fullest possible keeping with that melancholy which I had predetermined as the tone of the poem." His subject, too, was chosen deliberately, the death of a beautiful woman being "unquestionably, the most poetical topic in the world."

Easy to laugh; but it should be remembered that Poe's own mother had died young and beautiful, and that his beloved young wife was at that very moment in the process of expiring from tuberculosis.

Another poetical ideal to which Poe clung tenaciously and which might account for some of his own limitations was his belief that "the *indefinite* is an element in the true *poiesis*," and that "a suggestive indefiniteness of meaning, with the view of bringing about a definiteness of vague and therefore of spiritual *effect*" is the desideratum. Again, this is a principle we see richly illustrated in Poe's imaginative writing; again, the author's insistence on it shows the limits of his technical abilities. Indefiniteness is appropriate for a brief poem or story; for a "sustained effort" (a necessary endeavor, Poe's protestations notwithstanding) it is not enough.

Poe's aesthetics and critical standards were too narrow, but they were influential in their day and turned out to be remarkably prescient of the sort of aesthetic ideals that would predominate for more than a century after his death in 1849. They apply very little to the current scene; we have passed into an extremely didactic phase both in literature and criticism, and the "sustained effort" is, if anything, overvalued today.

What on earth would Poe the critic make, for example, of the modern fashion for encyclopedic metafiction? As an imaginative writer, he would certainly be pleased by the esteem in which he is still held, and still more gratified by his towering reputation in France. For as he once admitted in his typically unbuttoned fashion, "My whole nature utterly revolts at the idea that there is any Being in the Universe superior to *myself*!" ♦

B&A

Home at Last

Which metropolis may claim the peripatetic Poe?

BY SHAWN MACOMBER

Ed Pettit (Philadelphia), Jeff Jerome (Baltimore), Paul Lewis (Boston)

TIM SHAFFER / REUTERS

What would Charles Baudelaire have made of the scene at the Free Library of Philadelphia one frigid evening last winter, the building's lower-level auditorium filled to capacity for a boisterous debate among representatives of three American cities—Baltimore, Boston, and Philadelphia—over which should lay claim to the legacy, if not the bones, of Edgar Allan Poe?

After all, in an overwrought 1859 essay, the French poet and critic wailed that "Poe and his country were not on the same level." Indeed, Baudelaire inferred that, for Poe, "the United States was nothing more than a vast prison through which he wandered with the feverish unrest of one who was born to breathe the air of a purer world," a nation filled with "sardonic and superior" ninnies overly obsessed with Poe's "erratic and heteroclite existence" and "the alcohol on his breath that could have been lit with a candle."

Yet here, in Poe's bicentennial year, several hundred Americans passionately joined a tussle over the deceased author as if he were a newly single cheerleader a week before prom—cheering some arguments, serving up catcalls at others, reciting stanzas of "The Raven" en masse with little prompting. There have been tough words of late from living critics: Algis Valiunas, in a recent *Commentary* essay entitled "No to Poe," wrote that while the "maniacal frivolity" of his work may "take on a cast of deliquescent solemnity," it is "by no means serious." But surely, the Great Poe Debate of 2009, as it was dubbed, would chasten the ghost of Baudelaire, even if the Postal Service's new Poe commemorative stamp failed to do so.

Then again, perhaps not. It was easy enough to imagine Baudelaire painting his face with a—sardonic?

Shawn Macomber is a writer in Philadelphia.

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superior?—smirk as La Salle professor Ed Pettit, proprietor of the authoritative, quirky blog "Ed & Edgar: My Adventures in the Cult of Poe," bounded into the auditorium in a boxer's robe bearing the slogan "Philly Poe Guy" to the strains of the *Rocky* theme, waving a shovel and bellowing that he had come "not to bury Poe but to unbury him." Pettit's later addendum that he "would love to exhume his wife and mother-in-law, too" and Boston College professor Paul Lewis marching in with a campy gait behind a giant plush raven on a stick, quite possibly would have set Baudelaire choking on his cheese.

Granted, there were aspects of the debate of which Poe himself would have likely disapproved. For example, the Poe impersonator got big laughs by feigning imperious indignation at jokes about his marriage to his beloved (13-year-old) cousin, Virginia Clemm. He might also have lamented that the final verdict was determined by voice vote: "Democracy is a very admirable form of government," he once famously quipped, "for dogs."

Nevertheless, such an adoring reception might well have warmed the reanimated heart of a man who was traumatized by his mother's early death, and left this world in a lonely, broken stupor in the fall of 1849, unceremoniously carted off to a hospital by members of his own family unwilling to tend to him. When a hospital doctor told Poe a day later that he'd "soon be in the company of friends" again, Peter Ackroyd reveals—in his fine, brief biography *Poe: A Life Cut Short*—that Poe "broke out into an agony of self-reproach at his degradation" and protested that "the best thing a friend might do for him was to blow out his [Poe's] brains."

None did. Poe died anyway. Only four mourners attended the three-minute funeral service. Poe's grave was unmarked. "Poe was a perpetual orphan in the world," Ackroyd muses. "All the evidence of his career, and of his writing, suggests that he was bound by ropes of fire to the first experiences of abandonment and of loneliness."

Interior of the Poe House, Philadelphia

How long Poe would have remained enamored of his new-found 21st-century friends is less than certain. Maybe the fanfare would frustrate him. "Either the memory of past bliss is the anguish of today or the agonies which *are* have their origin in the ecstasies that *might have been*," he wrote in "Berenice."

Not to mention, in his own day, that neither acolytes nor benefactors held Poe's esteem very long. He could be dreadfully cruel to those who believed in him most—especially while imbibing certain spirits, a not-uncommon occurrence. Poe, echoing *Hamlet*, described the pestilence incarnate of "The Masque of the Red Death" as having "out-Heroded Herod," and he knew of whence he imagined, just as the self-control issues Poe dreamt up for William Wilson ("Men usually grow base by degrees. From me, in an instant, all virtue dropped bodily as a mantle") could have been derived from the *write what you know* dictum. When Henry Wadsworth Longfellow failed to respond to Poe's charges against him of the "most barbarous class of literary robbery," Poe went ahead and composed "an imaginary riposte to his own charges under the name 'Outis,' or 'Nobody,' simply to continue the public debate for a little longer," Ackroyd notes.

Poe was, in other words, ornery enough to quarrel with himself.

Poe's affection toward this contemporary cadre might also be tempered somewhat by his robust literary ego. *Well, of course they love me*. Evidence? Well, there were his assured takes-one-to-know-one-flavored ruminationson brilliance: "To appreciate thoroughly the work of what we call genius is to possess all the genius by which the work was produced," said Poe, the same critic who once bragged, "I intend to put up with nothing I can put down"—a category defined widely to leave early supporter James Russell Lowell wondering if Poe sometimes mistook "his phial of prussic acid for his inkstand."

Compare this vast inventory of scathing critiques with Poe's pronouncements on his own work: When Poe encountered an acquaintance shortly after finishing "The Raven," he confided, "I have just written the greatest poem that was ever written." (His friend's response? "That is a fine achievement." Well, what would *you* say?)

He pitched his treatise on the universe, *Eureka*, to publisher George P. Putnam as a book that "would at once command such universal and intense attention that the publisher might give up all other enterprises, and make this one book the business

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of his lifetime." (It sold 500 copies the first year—somewhat short of Poe's optimistic estimate of one million.)

More than once during his life, Poe insisted he would either "conquer or die." The "perpetual orphan" managed to do both.

Jeff Jerome, longtime curator of the Poe House in Baltimore, took a frontrunner approach to the debate. He (figuratively) gripped Poe's bones like a politician, clinging to a slim-but-solid lead in the polls. Gentle ridicule of the pretenders to the throne and an appeal to tradition were the hallmarks of his attack.

Poe had Baltimore roots stretching back to a grandmother who "made trousers for Lafayette's troops" while the general was encamped in the city, Jerome said. The author was originally buried in his grandfather's plot. It was in Baltimore that Poe composed his first horror story, "Berenice." ("Premature burial, grave desecration, mutilation—it was a fun story!" Jerome enthused.) The curator allowed that there had been little initial fanfare for Poe's resting carrion in Baltimore. Since the writer was reinterred in 1875, however, the city had "stepped up to the plate" and honored him better than anyone else, from the "Poe Toaster" who has left three roses and a half-bottle of cognac on Poe's grave on the author's birthday every year since 1949 to its NFL team, the Ravens.

Boston's Paul Lewis had a more difficult task and conceded as much straightaway, contemplating aloud his "underdog" status and kinship with Daniel Webster, "an earlier Boston orator" called to "argue his case against the Devil himself in front of an audience of the damned."

Before the debate, Lewis distributed postcards with a Boston-centric Poe timeline (sample entry: "November 1848: Poe attempts suicide in a Boston hotel, thus settling for all time the question of where he wanted to be buried") alongside abridged quotations ("We like Boston. We were born there" but omits "and perhaps it is just as well not to mention that we are heartily ashamed of the fact. . . . The Bostonians have no soul") and, noting Boston's relatively recent interest in honoring Poe, faddishly labeled himself the candidate of, yes, "change you can believe in."

Alas, riffs and allusions were not going to carry the day against two Poe scholars. Lewis fell back on a counterintuitive argument—since the other two panel cities had primarily "inspired [Poe's] work by torturing him" and the only city with "a legitimate claim to Poe's legacy" was the one "he didn't live in much of the time he was a professional writer." He said,

> For these guys, it's all about 'Well, Poe lived here,' 'Well, Poe worked here.' They don't want to talk about the quality of his life in these cities. When they recognized his genius, when these cities saw what he could do, they thought, 'Hmm, here's an editor. We could work him 80 hours a week and pay starvation wages.' *Oh, we love Poe. We supported Poe.* The hell they did! Before they claim his legacy they should get down on their knees and beg his forgiveness.

Only four mourners attended the three-minute funeral service. Poe's grave was unmarked. "Poe was a perpetual orphan in the world," Peter Ackroyd muses. "All the evidence of his career, and of his writing, suggests that he was bound by ropes of fire to the first experiences of abandonment and of loneliness."

In short, Lewis said finally, Baltimore and Philadelphia had "chewed him up and spit him out." Here moderator Grover Silcox felt obliged to dive into the fray, ringing the miniature Liberty Bell that served as the timer.

"I have to be honest with you, Paul," Silcox said, "what you just described we look at as a compliment in Philadelphia." Actually, in building the case for Philadelphia's ownership of Poe in a 2007 article, Pettit had cited the city's mid-19th century . . . *attributes* ("race and labor riots, poverty and crime," "a stinking effluvia of corruption and decadence," "brazen grave-robbers") as integral.

"Poe, if we define him by his macabre works," Pettit wrote, "felt right at home."

He was not so blunt at the debate. Emboldened by the hometown crowd in his quest to prove Philadelphia the "crucible of Poe's creative genius," the professor held forth with a grandiloquent theatricality.

"Baltimore hath told you Poe is theirs," he began. "If it were so, it were a grievous fault and grievous they shall be when I answer them." Pettit scoffed at the idea that Poe and Baltimore "go together like crab and cake," and compared Poe's time in Baltimore to Babe Ruth's Red Sox years.

"Philadelphia is where Poe had his greatest seasons as a writer," Pettit said. "Baltimore? That's just Poe's minor league team." Pettit reeled off some of Poe's Philadelphia-impressive curriculum vitae: "The Fall of the House of Usher," "The Gold-Bug," "The Pit and the Pendulum," "The Tell-Tale Heart."

Pettit also questioned Baltimore's motivations for reinterring Poe in more prestigious digs in 1875 ("Years later Poe becomes famous and Baltimore says, 'Hey isn't that famous guy buried in one of our cemeteries?'") and only briefly addressed Lewis's case ("Boston? Please. Poe was only born there because that was the city his pregnant actress-mother

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happened to be performing in when she went into labor").

Pettit acknowledged that his dream of appropriating Poe's body in order to, as he wrote, "reinter it under the floorboards at Seventh and Spring Garden"—i.e., at Philadelphia's lovely Poe National Historic Site—"or brick it into the wall" was, despite the shovel on the table, quixotic. "We all know his body will never really be moved, so let's claim his legacy," Pettit said.

There were moments of testiness. Pettit kept ribbing Jerome with not-so-thinly-veiled suggestions that Poe might have lived and thrived had Baltimore not mysteriously gotten hold of the author on his fateful, truncated 1849 trip to New York, and, when Lewis bragged that Boston's Mayor Thomas Menino had issued a proclamation in honor of the Poe bicentennial, Jerome shot back sarcastically, "How can we top that?"

"You could keep your mayor out of jail," Lewis said.

Oh, snap! Still, the brouhaha ended with the debaters expressing their admiration for one another. Everyone hyped their own Poe events—symposiums, theatrical productions, impersonator visits, lectures, page-a-day calendars, Poe-themed anthologies, etc. Free Library of Philadelphia employees handed out brochures for its own exhibit, which included rare manuscripts, Charles Dickens's "Raven"-inspiring stuffed raven, letters, and even a lock of Poe's hair.

Philadelphia had run away with the debate, but no one seemed particularly surprised or dejected by the outcome. In *Eureka* Poe posited "diffusion from Unity, under the conditions, involves a tendency to return into Unity—a tendency ineradicable until satisfied." So it was on this night as well.

If it had been a more pedantic, less good-natured debate, would there have been a more conclusive result? Ironically, the lighter atmosphere may have been a better tribute. *Southern Literary Messenger* editor Thomas Willis White once complained that Poe's work might be a bit "too horrible." Poe responded that it was simply "the ludicrous heightened into the grotesque: the fearful colored into the horrible: the witty exaggerated into the burlesque: the singular wrought out into the strange and mystical. You may say all this is bad taste."

Poe was, it seems, not entirely opposed to a little histrionic hamming.

Further, in "The Gold-Bug" the narrator ponders the puzzling situation around him, and ruminates that "The mind struggles to establish a connection—and, being unable to do so, suffers a species of temporary paralysis." If arguing legacy helps contemporary readers contextualize the work, or piques their interest enough to fortify them with the patience to delve into Poe's somewhat antiquated syntax, that's all well and good enough.

Original burial place, Baltimore

Unlike the mystery in "The Gold-Bug," though, there is no real possible resolution to the Poe Wars. Pettit's sports team metaphor is apt: No booster of any one city will ever have the perspective to accept the claim of another, and Poe isn't around to express a preference. Hence, another appropriate narrator quote, this time from "The Fall of the House of Usher."

> I was forced to fall back upon the unsatisfactory conclusion, that while, beyond doubt, there are combinations of very simple natural objects which have the power of thus affecting us, still the analysis of this power lies among considerations beyond our depth.

Moreover, not everyone wants to be part of the debate. Although Poe self-identified as a Virginian, and lived in Richmond longer than any other city, *Edgar Allan Poe in Richmond* author Chris Semtner said that he was content to leave sparring over the author's spiritual residency to others.

"Poe was opposed to provincialism in writing and life," he explained by phone from his curator's office at Richmond's Poe Museum, a cornucopia of inventive exhibits and collections alongside an "Enchanted Garden" shrine to Poe which, incidentally, you may reserve to wed your own Ligeia.

"He wanted to compete on the world stage. He would probably love that people are still arguing over him, and if it gets people to read his work—that's the best way to honor his legacy, really. But I'm not sure he'd like to be pigeonholed into one city as if he was a local sports team or had limited appeal."

Instead of joining the Poe Wars, the Richmond museum held a Victorian séance with a Poe impersonator, stayed open on his birthday for a full 24 hours, toasted the man with champagne, and presented new exhibits of rare Poe daguerreotypes and another on the author's influence on graphic novels.

And yet, despite his official neutrality, Semtner did have a proposition for his fellow Poe fanatics. "In the true spirit of Poe," he said, "the different groups honoring his memory should not fight amongst themselves, but should unite to attack Longfellow." ♦

ROB CARR / AP PHOTO

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B&A

Death in Coyoacán

How the long arm of Stalin liquidated Leon Trotsky.

BY STEPHEN SCHWARTZ

In 1939, while Stalin and Hitler were allied against the democratic West, the predecessor of the House Committee on Un-American Activities, and its chairman, Texas Democratic congressman Martin Dies, sought testimony from one of the world's leading authorities on Soviet Communism. But the witness was living outside the United States, and a visa to cross the border and appear before the committee was denied him. Less than a year later, the prospective witness had been murdered in a brutal, flamboyant manner.

Trotsky
Downfall of a Revolutionary
by Bertrand M. Patenaude
HarperCollins, 384 pp., $27.99

The man who desperately wished to "name names" to the House committee was Leon Trotsky, exiled in Mexico. Although his death had been ordered by Stalin since the mid-1930s, the invitation to appear before the committee—where Trotsky intended to disclose the full extent of Soviet financing and control of Communists in America and around the world—must have made his killing even more urgent to the Russian dictator. Certainly, had the exile been allowed to answer the committee's invitation, today's common wisdom about communism in America, about the House Committee on Un-American Activities, about testifying before it, and even about Leon Trotsky himself, might be very different.

Or perhaps not. The continued—or better, revived—discussion of Trotsky is mysterious. The Bolshevik political doctrine he adopted only months before the Leninist revolution of 1917 has been thoroughly discredited. In today's Russia his name is barely known, particularly among the young. His books are unread, out of print, or issued here and there, in various languages, by obscure political sects. And yet his name remains vivid in modern history. At one end of an equally low spectrum of memory, he is recalled as the victim of an attack by a Soviet agent wielding, it is said, an ice-pick. (In reality, the fatal weapon was a mountaineer's climbing axe.) At the other end, he is viewed as an inspiration for neoconservatism—an equally garbled association.

Bertrand Patenaude's new book is not a biography, although it comes with a blurb from Misha Glenny claiming that it "gets closer to Trotsky's essential character than any of the vast tomes devoted to him in the past." What vast tomes are those? The only full-length biography, admittedly vast in its extent, is Isaac Deutscher's trilogy—*The Prophet Armed*, *The Prophet Unarmed*, *The Prophet Outcast*—still in print after more than 50 years. Although Deutscher's Trotsky has its failings, they are mainly ideological. The onetime Trotskyist Deutscher had made his peace with Stalin in the decades after Trotsky's death, and, following this course, he paralleled the action of most of Trotsky's surviving loyalists. The Trotskyist movement today consists mainly of uncritical enthusiasts for Fidel Castro, Hugo Chávez, and, until his death, Slobodan Miloševic.

The Trotskys arrive in Mexico, 1937

ASSOCIATED PRESS

But the faults in Deutscher are perceptible only to a handful of initiates: One hesitates to use the term specialists, since after Deutscher little original in English on the subject has been written on the basis of primary sources. Patenaude himself is a researcher at the Hoover Institution at Stanford and has availed himself of resources held there. Trotsky papers are also kept at Harvard, which Patenaude visited, and at the International Institute of Social History in Amsterdam, which he did not. (Russian archives, which must be extensive and definitive, have not been opened to scholars.) Patenaude's work so closely echoes Deutscher's, except for trivial details, that a reader is entitled to ask whether there is much that is really new to say about Trotsky. Far from being a biography of the man, *Trotsky: Downfall of a Revolutionary* is a kind of adventure-*cum*-mystery story, focusing on Trotsky's Mexican exile and assassination.

This chronological emphasis is understandable, since if today's readers know much about Trotsky, it typically has to do with his love affair with Frida Kahlo, the Mexican Communist artist and latter-day feminist icon. And the story of the killing itself is both fascinating in its convoluted preparations and lurid in its outcome.

Until the murder of John F. Kennedy 23 years later, the assassination of Leon Trotsky was the most famous such act of the 20th century. Or at least, the best-known with a background comprehensible to most of the world, since the 1914 double shooting of the Habsburg crown prince Franz Ferdinand and his wife in Sarajevo was a murky affair when it happened—and to those who remember anything about it (and they are few outside the Balkans), it remains surprisingly opaque.

By contrast, the brazen killing of

Stephen Schwartz is the author, most recently, of The Other Islam: Sufism and the Road to Global Harmony.

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an isolated and politically weak émigré, a hemisphere away from Moscow, should have disabused anybody about the "benevolence" of Soviet policies and habits, especially since it occurred while the Stalin-Hitler alliance was in effect. But the capacity of Communists and their acolytes (then known as fellow-travelers) to ignore the reality before them has always been remarkable, and constitutes another story entirely.

Patenaude's narrative begins with the arrival of Trotsky and his second wife Natalia Sedova, a daughter of the Russian nobility, in Mexico in 1937. White of hair and beard, he was 57 years old; the nickname used by those who worked with him—"the Old Man"—was a reference to authority of the kind usually granted military commanders or ship's captains, rather than an indicator of age. (It was also considered a serious gaffe among his followers when used by those who did now know him personally.)

The passage to Mexico had been long and tortuous. Expelled from Soviet Russia to Turkey in 1929, Trotsky was sent to France, following Soviet pressure, in 1933, then to Norway in 1935, and finally to Mexico two years later. He was welcomed by President Lázaro Cárdenas, as well as by Diego Rivera and Rivera's lover Kahlo. He moved with his wife, secretaries, and bodyguards into the "Blue House" where Kahlo had grown up, in a small village then outside Mexico City called Coyoacán.

Yet even with protection by the Mexican authorities, the end was nearer than Trotsky might have realized. The decision to liquidate him, wherever he could be found, had been made, and the assassin, a Spanish Communist named Ramón Mercader, would soon undergo intensive training for the assignment. Communists in the United States were actively seeking targets for use as infiltration shields in gaining entry to the Trotsky household.

One of these unfortunate marks was a Brooklynite named Sylvia Ageloff, whose sister Ruth occasionally went to Trotsky's house to serve as a Russian-language secretary. Trotsky favored Ruth. Sylvia worked in New York City's welfare department with a Communist named Ruby Weil, who went with Sylvia on a trip to Europe. Sylvia, who was not known for her romantic history, was introduced to the suave and handsome Mercader, who became her lover.

The seduction of Sylvia Ageloff gave the Soviets access to their quarry. The role of American Communists in the conspiracy, and its main coordination by way of cities north of the border, cannot be overstated. As Patenaude writes in his characteristically flashy (but in this case accurate) tone, "the road to Coyoacán led through New York City." In reality, Trotskyism as an intellectual phenomenon was also centered in New York, but the Stalinists there were more determined than their opponents, and they had a specific agenda.

Trotsky, postmortem, August 20, 1940

So Patenaude's recounting of these grim events has a film-noir feeling. Trotsky and his ménage left the Blue House, and moved a few blocks away, when tensions over the manipulative Kahlo alienated Rivera as well as Trotsky's wife, Natalia. In May 1940 the Mexican mural painter David Siqueiros led a party of Stalinist fanatics in a machine gun attack on the new residence, in which Trotsky's grandson was shot in the foot; but Trotsky and Natalia escaped injury.

The Siqueiros attack remains something of a mystery, and may have been a feint intended to cover the penetration of the group by Mercader; he showed up for the first time four days later. He now possessed a fake identity as a Canadian with the misspelled name "Jacson." (The Soviet passport forger responsible for this document was none too worldly.) With Sylvia Ageloff as his human passport, he again visited the Trotsky house, and three months after the Siqueiros assault, stood behind Trotsky as the latter sat in his workroom and read through a political essay Mercador had written.

The assassin knew his job. He realized that Trotsky could not resist the temptation to help form a writer's work, and would concentrate on reading, lowering his gaze and leaving his back unprotected. Mercader struck his blow, and after a night and a day in a Mexico City hospital Trotsky died.

The assassin received a 20-year prison sentence, and on his release in 1960, his true identity was revealed by the writer Isaac Don Levine. Mercader went to Moscow, where he was decorated with the Order of Lenin, and honored as a Hero of the Soviet Union. He died in 1978, aged 64—four years older than his victim when the assassination occurred in 1940.

The most interesting questions about Leon Trotsky have yet to be asked in any new book. It is not enough to say that he was brilliant, or that he shared in responsibility for the horrors of communism, or that he defied Stalin unto death. He remained apart from the Bolsheviks until three months before their 1917 coup, and had been the most articulate critic of Lenin's dictatorial methods.

What changed his mind? Could he simply not resist a ride on the train of revolutionary power? He was sympathetic to the United States, and expressed a desire to live under Franklin D. Roosevelt rather than Lázaro Cárdenas. (He had resided in New York before the Bolshevik Revolution.) What attracted him so strongly? At the end of his life he expressed an unexpected sympathy for Zionism in the face of Nazi atrocities, and even read the Bible, which he had been taught as a Jewish youth in Ukraine. He took to calling his adversary "Cain-Stalin." How would he have greeted the founding of Israel? And had he not been killed, would the Soviet Army ever have rebelled against Stalin and returned him to command? Many thought that a real possibility; Trotsky was not among them.

GETTY IMAGES

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As World War II began, Trotsky still clung to the idea that the Soviet Union was socialist and, therefore, progressive; but he also warned that if it did not reform in a democratic direction after the war—he specifically called for an end to a single-party state—socialism would have to be considered a utopian fantasy. Most of his intellectual adherents became conservatives or neoconservatives: James Burnham, a leading American Trotskyist, was a founder of *National Review*. Would Trotsky have followed them—and how far? He was only 60 when he died in 1940. What would he have had to say in 1950? His widow Natalia broke with the Trotskyists when they supported North Korea in the war that began that year. She died in 1962.

Unfortunately, Patenaude deals with no new issues in Trotsky's life, and this volume is replete with errors indicating a hasty dependence on secondary sources. Ramon Mercader, for example, died in Cuba as an adviser to Castro, and not in Russia as Patenaude intimates. Moreover, without access to the Soviet archives, Patenaude has depended on unreliable memoirs which could well be Russian disinformation. His psychologizing is often jejune: Patenaude declares that, when Trotsky was expelled from Russia to Turkey, it "must have pleased him" that the Soviet passport he was handed described him as a "writer."

A new, critical, far-reaching examination of the Trotsky conundrum—why his name retains its prominence when so many others are forgotten—remains to be written. ♦

B&A

Talk Isn't Cheap

When 'free speech' undermines the First Amendment.

BY MARY GRABAR

'A teacher in [a democratic] community," said Plato, "is afraid of his students and flatters them, while the students despise their teachers or tutors."

Among the fears besetting public school teachers today is the lawsuit from a student—a development not anticipated by Plato. But since the 1965 case of *Tinker* v. *Des Moines Independent Community School District*, the threat of lawsuits has become a fact of life in our public schools. In *Speaking Up*, Anne Proffitt Dupre presents a compelling narrative, from that watershed case to the infamous *Morse* v. *Frederick* (2007), where high school student Joseph Frederick sued his principal for ordering him to take down his 14-foot banner advertising "Bong Hits 4 Jesus."

Speaking Up
The Unintended Costs of Free Speech in Public Schools
by Anne Proffitt Dupre
Harvard, 304 pp., $29.95

Mary Grabar is a writer in Atlanta.

The sheer fact that a student would provoke school administrators and then sue over his (light) punishment tells how far down the road to Plato's anarchic state we have come—at least in our public schools.

A law professor and former schoolteacher, Dupre understands the motivation behind (and consequences of) such lawsuits in schools that were instituted for, as Thomas Jefferson envisioned, the "common people." Jefferson's concern for an educated and principled citizenry required, as Dupre points out, a set of "core values."

"Core values" were at issue in the *Tinker* case involving four students, ages 8 to 15. In defiance of school rules they wore black armbands to protest American involvement in Vietnam. But it was the *fathers* who sued the school district after their children were sent home: Not surprisingly, the Tinker parents were involved in antiwar organizations and SDS. Although school authorities won the case in the federal district court and appeals court, the Supreme Court famously declared that students and teachers do not "shed their constitutional rights to free expression at the schoolhouse gate."

Since then, schools have altered disciplinary practices to comport with *Tinker* and subsequent cases. Although bong advocate Joseph Frederick did not prevail, the threat of similar litigation hovers, inspiring costly preemptive measures. Even the opinions of some conservative judges and counselors testify to the shift in tenor.

For instance, Dupre notes the "strange bedfellows" that Joe Frederick attracted: the Christian Legal Society and the Liberty Legal Institute, which feared that a broad ruling would give politically correct schools the power to restrain the speech of conservative students. This shift in focus testifies to the radical change in the curriculum and atmosphere in our schools; conservative students now need protection for expressing opinions once considered "core values."

Conservative students also need protection in our universities. There the issue of "academic freedom"—for certain members of the faculty—prevails, and has been championed in such efforts as the AAUP's 1915 resolution against government infringement and the 1952 *Wieman* case against the requirement that teachers sign loyalty oaths. But professors have morphed from Justice Felix Frankfurter's characterization as "priests of our democracy" to a priestly class that seeks to control the speech of students, and the hiring, promotion, and publication of colleagues.

It's strange what parents might consider "free speech." But court decisions since 1965, and the passage of the Civil Rights Attorney's Fees Awards Act of 1976, made it easier for the father of Matthew Fraser to sue in 1986 on behalf of his son, who had given a speech using pornographic sexual metaphors to 600 of his fellow students. Emboldened teams of parents and students have jumped into other "free speech" arenas involving

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student newspapers, book "banning," religious speech in the form of prayer, and the Pledge of Allegiance.

What becomes evident, however, is an unconsciously coordinated effort between the curriculum devisers and the legal system, and between teachers and parents. Since 1965 we have come to see children as little adults—but without the responsibilities. As teachers grant more authority to students as "critical thinkers" capable of resolving complex issues, parents treat their children as entirely capable and as worthy of free speech rights as grown-up scholars—and deserving of due respect and honors from their teachers.

Justice Hugo Black's assertion—"our Constitution assumes that the common sense of the people and their attachment to our country will enable them, after free discussion, to withstand ideas that are wrong"—is applied prematurely to children. Dupre notes:

> Of course that assumes that the people have "common sense" or the education and cognitive skills to be able to sort the wheat from the chaff. Therein lies the conundrum, and it is a particularly difficult issue when dealing with students who are in the midst of gaining that knowledge and common sense and attachment to their country.

Tinker helped turn our schools into ideological debating forums that place adult burdens on children at the expense of the basic knowledge necessary to function as good citizens. Parents are often all too ready to protest on behalf of their children's academic standing and to support them in dubious "free speech" issues. Yet, as we saw in this past presidential election, children—many far too young to vote—are subjected to political messages through bulletin boards, curricula, and class discussion, and are made to perform songs, chants, pledges, and dances.

We've gone from black armbands to Barack Obama song-and-dance routines performed by starry-eyed children under the appreciative gaze of parents who would claim to champion their "free speech" rights. Would Plato have foreseen that? ♦

B&A

Venetian Rivals

The glory of artistic competition among the masters.

BY JOSEPH PHELAN

The 16th century—the Cinquecento—marks the golden age of Venetian painting. Today the canvases of Titian, Tintoretto, and Veronese may seem like the ultimate Old Master art, yet this exciting exhibit (subtitled *Rivals in Renaissance Venice*) aims to show how contemporary these works once were: experimental, bold, and even shocking.

Titian, Tintoretto, Veronese
The Louvre
September 17-
January 4, 2010

Titian (c. 1488-1576) was the supreme figure in Venetian art from 1515 on. His extremely long life meant that the younger painters Tintoretto (1518-1594) and Veronese (1528-1588) overlapped creatively and professionally with him for nearly 40 years.

By significantly grouping two or three canvases, curator Frederick Ilchman has lovingly re-created, through carefully chosen juxtapositions, the heated atmosphere of artistic creation in the 16th-century republic, showing how these younger men forged their own distinct painterly styles by responding to Titian and each other, and demonstrating in the process how competition inspires the achievements of even the greatest artists.

At the start of the show we see two religious pictures, one by the young Titian and the other by his teacher Bellini. These are examples of a popular Venetian genre, known as a Sacra Conversazione, a "sacred conversation" among the Virgin, Child, and saints. Bellini's panel has a ravishingly beautiful palette, but the holy protagonists gaze out at us rather than at each other and seem frozen, aloof, disconnected.

Titian, by contrast, invites us into a silent narrative. On the right, St. Dominic and the donor seem to have just arrived, drawing the gazes of the Virgin and Child toward the fervent supplicants. We see Titian building on the broad and firm foundation of his teacher while developing a highly original way of conceiving and dramatizing his subject. We are especially taken by the handsome, idealized Saint Dominic, and the sensitive face of the donor qualifies as an early Titian portrait of distinction.

For it was in the field of portraiture that Titian marked out his claim to fame. With his magical ability to paint men and women of high rank not as they were but as they wished to be, Titian endowed his sitters with the nobility, power, and dignity that a ruler must have but that may have eluded many of them in real life. He thereby established the conventions of aristocratic and kingly portraiture.

A prime example of Titian's portraiture is the closeup of the 74-year-old Paul III, the last of the Renaissance popes, the reluctant reformer of the church, and the patron of Michelangelo's *Last Judgment*. Sitting on his throne, he seems to have just turned to look at us from atop a mountain of crushed velvet, his dark, arresting eyes full of reason and the will to power.

After confronting Titian's portrayal, one cannot conceive a more monumental, direct, or forceful image of this paragon of spiritual and worldly power. With this work, the artist won international fame the sort of which had never before been conferred on an artist. Other great portrait paint-

Joseph Phelan is the editor of Artcyclopedia.com.

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ers such as El Greco and Velázquez learned a great deal from him, but it is arguable if any later painter ever surpassed this portrait.

Titian's mid-career success around 1645 with the international elite opened up opportunities in Venice for younger men. First among these was Tintoretto, whose smoldering self-portrait announces his arrival as an ambitious, confident risk-taker. While Titian brooded over his compositions for months and even years, Tintoretto marketed himself as a kind of anti-Titian, painting large canvases at great speed while cutting prices and even giving his work away to the various Venetian confraternities that were so much a part of the Serene Republic's social network.

One of the important patrons he sought out was the brilliant satirist, writer, and publicist Aretino, offering this close friend of Titian a painting for his ceiling with the self-referential *Flaying of Marsyas*, a learned and cheeky calling card that announced his challenge to the older master.

As a way of further differentiating himself, Tintoretto began a long study of Florentine design, going so far as to display in his studio the motto "the draftsmanship of Michelangelo, the coloring of Titian." Tintoretto's *Baptism of Christ*, with the towering, muscular bodies of Christ and the Baptist, is a brilliant example of this synthesis.

The arrival of Veronese 10 years later further turned up the thermostat of the already hothouse atmosphere of the Venice art scene. The younger man modeled himself on Titian, while the wily Titian used Veronese to undercut the hated Tintoretto. From his youth, Veronese made his name as an opulent colorist and he was to grow into the master of enormous feast scenes painted on canvas for the walls of refectories.

If visitors still need an added incentive to attend a show filled with the constant parleys of painterly rivalry, they should be more than satisfied with the mythological nudes. Venice in this period was famous for its courtesans and prostitutes who numbered in the thousands, making it the "brothel of Europe." It is no surprise that highly sophisticated depictions of female sensuality were first developed there. While it was a Florentine painter, Botticelli, who first monumentalized the Renaissance female nude in the 15th century with his *Birth of Venus*, it was Titian and his short-lived colleague Giorgione who reimagined her as reclining, voluptuous, and earthly.

'Susanna Bathing' by Jacopo Tintoretto (1555-56)

THE GALLERY COLLECTION / CORBIS

With his *Danae*, Titian's magic ability to turn paint into living flesh is astonishing. The artist breathes new life into the ancient myth of the young princess and beloved of Zeus who is shut up in a high tower by her fearful father. We apprehend the umber, soft gold, deep red, and cream tones of painting as an invitation to sexual desire, yet still are attracted to the individuality of the woman anticipating her lover's arrival in the form of soft golden rain. Even his archrival Michelangelo had praise for this work's life-giving vitality when he saw it in Rome.

Responding to Titian, Tintoretto produced his *Susannah Bathing*. The biblical story of the virtuous wife slandered by two prurient old men offered the artist an opportunity to create his own luminous female nude in a paradisal setting. We notice the bald heads of the men hidden away in the left hand corner only with some effort, but once we do, we appreciate the dramatic bite of this calm-before-the-storm composition even more.

The show ends with homage to the late painting styles of our trio. Titian once again sets the highest possible standard for his younger rivals. In his *Tarquin and Lucretia* the aged master returns to his great theme of eros to show its darkest dimensions. In what is undoubtedly the most brutal rape scene in all large-scale paintings of the Renaissance, he demonstrates how this medium can rise to the heights of tragic utterance previously reserved for dramatic poetry.

Tintoretto offers an even more shocking composition, with the already-nude Tarquin ripping the necklace off his victim's neck. As Lucretia's pearls fall onto the floor they become a metaphor for her impending loss of virtue, just as her tears will be transmuted into jewels of honor.

Tintoretto outlasted both his rivals by a decade and has the last word in this show. His Florentine contemporary, the painter and historian Giorgio Vasari, called him the most extraordinary brain in the history of painting. His aged self-portrait is an uncompromising picture of an exhausted old man whose mind continues to rage.

The rivalry of the Venetian golden age constitutes one of the richest chapters in the history of art. Together, Titian, Tintoretto, and Veronese created an unparalleled body of work, opened up new avenues of aesthetic expression, and forged a golden chain of influence that runs from El Greco, Rembrandt, and Velázquez to Willem de Kooning and Lucien Freud. ♦

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"Bitterly divided along party lines, the House formally rebuked Republican Rep. Joe Wilson Tuesday for shouting 'You lie' at President Barack Obama during last week's nationally televised speech to Congress."

—Associated Press, *September 15, 2009*

Parody

BER 22, 2009 ONE DOLLAR CHEAP

WILSON'S APOLOGY FOR OUTBURST REJECTED BY DEMS AS 'INSINCERE'

Democrats Vote on Further Punishment 'Until He Means It'

By CARL HULSE

WASHINGTON — House Democrats remain unconvinced that Representative Joe Wilson is truly sorry for shouting "You lie!" to President Barack Obama during his monumental health care address. Though Mr. Wilson apologized in a phone call to White House chief of staff Rahm Emanuel and was formally rebuked by his colleagues last week, a number of Democrats are demanding further retribution for his heckling until they are persuaded he is absolutely contrite.

Over the next few weeks, members of Congress, mostly Democrats, plan on introducing resolutions not only to rebuke Mr. Wilson, but also to "scold," "condemn," "scorn," "castigate," "chide," and "damn" him.

"As you know, an official rebuke is the mildest form of censure in Congress," says Larry J. Sabato of the University of Virginia and a convenient source for political soundbites. "If they take the maximum measure, however, and damn Mr. Wilson, that will send a serious message to others tempted to pull a similar stunt in the future."

According to the House Rules Manual, the official wording would be "Joe Wilson, this House damns you and your District to Hell." The vote is expected to be along party lines.

Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi is also considering a resolution that requires Mr. Wilson to sit facing a corner on the House floor while wearing a dunce cap. California representative Lois Capps is so haunted by the outburst that she would like to stick a bar of soap in the congressman's mouth for 10 minutes. "That always did the trick provided you don't use too harsh a soap," said Ms. Capps, who recommended something hypoallergenic.

Bettmann / Corbis

One of the punishments being considered for Rep. Joe Wilson.

Charles Rangel of New York suggested Mr. Wilson perform community service. "Make the man work for his penance," said the House Ways and Means chairman. "He could do other members' chores, for instance. I know my villa in the Dominican Republic could use some work."

Representative Henry Waxman of California proposed shaving Mr. Wilson's head and having him stand on a platform outside Congress wearing a placard around his neck that said "I betrayed the president." (Mr. Waxman admits he does not yet have the votes for this measure.)

"The problem with Joe Wilson is he doesn't look truly sorry, like Clinton-sorry" said Representative Steny Hoyer, who added, "we are reviewing all of our options and according to the Army Field Manual

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